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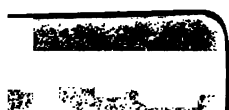






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Silk Willoughby.

HOW AMIABLE ARE THY TABERNACLES.

O LORD OF HOSTS!

FIFTY-TWO

# SHORT SERMONS,

FOR

PAROCHIAL OR DOMESTIC READING:

BY THE REV. JOSEPH JOWETT, M. A.

RECTOR OF SILK WILLOUGHBY,

AND DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD BARMAN.

LONDON

PUBLISHED BY

R. B. SEELEY AND W. BURNSIDE

AND SOLD BY

L. B. SEELEY AND SONS, FLEET STREET.

1835.



100.3.492.



*To my Parishioners, at Silk Willoughby, in the  
County of Lincoln.*

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MY DEAR FRIENDS,

Ever since it pleased God, by family sickness of which I cannot yet see the termination, to remove me to a distance from you, I have been desirous of giving you some pledge of my continued concern for your welfare. You may have thought that other scenes, and other connections, must by this time have almost broken the cord which bound us to each other. Be assured, however, that a pastoral intercourse of nineteen years, with all its attendant circumstances of pain and pleasure, of anxious labour, and of hopes at one time disappointed and at another fulfilled, was not to be so easily forgotten. He who now occupies my place, and is "over you in the

Lord," has my heart-felt prayer that he may be, in the best sense of the word, "the Minister of God to you for good:" but—"because I have you in my heart"—I cannot be content that he shall do his work alone. By this little book, therefore, I come among you once more. Present in spirit, though absent in body, I here set before you the substance of those Divine Truths, which it was once my highest happiness, from one Sabbath-day to another, to press upon your acceptance. You will, I think, readily perceive, "that it is *my* mouth which speaketh unto you:" but oh that, as you read, the Holy Spirit may cause you to hear his persuasive voice, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it!" May you receive it, "not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God!"

It is indeed, my friends, no slight privilege, that this word has been proclaimed among you for so long a period of time. Recollect—(and I say it not in a 'spirit of vain-glory—God forbid! but from a genuine desire, that you may not hereafter be found to have "received his grace in vain;" ) recollect, I say, how affectionately you have been warned, that "the wages of sin is death;"—how you have been urged to seek that spiritual influence, which would enable you to repent and forsake sin, *and to ask for mercy, while mercy was yet*

to be found ;—how earnestly Jesus Christ has been recommended to you, in his glorious offices of Prophet, Priest, and King ;—and how often, and how plainly, the Spirit of Christ has spoken to your heart the very same thing, which the Minister uttered in your ears. Many there are, I assure you, many even in Christian England, who never heard the things which you hear ; and which not a few of you have had the opportunity of hearing from your earliest childhood. I repeat it, therefore—your privileges have been great indeed ; and solemn is the account of them which you must render to the Lord Jesus, “ in the great day of his appearing and glory.”

What will that account be, which each individual among you will then deliver in ? Will it be, that you rejected “ the things which belonged unto your peace ? ” Or, that you knew and welcomed “ the day of your visitation ? ”

If I had the power—and if you knew that I had the power, to draw aside the impenetrable veil which conceals the future world from our view ; and to inform you, one by one, what will be his lot in that awful day of account ; nothing (I am persuaded) could exceed the eager and alarmed curiosity, with which you would listen to my words. But I pretend to no such power : however I may



fear for some, and have hope respecting others, among you, I have determined to "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." Must the truth, then, remain entirely unknown, till that period shall arrive? No; the judgment, which neither I nor any other man has authority to pronounce, may even now be anticipated by yourselves. "The counsels of the heart" cannot be entirely unknown to the heart in which they are conceived: "the things of darkness" are not "hidden" from him who, alas! is familiar with them. 'If, therefore, any of you be a blasphemer of God, a hinderer or slanderer of His word, an adulterer, or be in malice, or envy, or in any other grievous crime;' if you be conscious, that you have no supreme love to Christ, to his gospel—his house—his Sabbath—his commandments; if you have never yet cast yourselves at his footstool, seeking reconciliation with God through the atonement of his 'most precious blood-shedding;' then, deceive not your own selves: "as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between thee and death!" On the other hand, if any of you be willing and able to say, 'I am a grievous sinner, but—Jesus died for me! and his Spirit has given me

a heart to trust in his blood, and in some small measure to obey, honour, and love him :’ then, let not that man despair, even though he may justly abhor himself, because he does not more heartily love the Lord. A mark has been set upon him by the Spirit of holiness ; let him assure himself that it is genuine ; and, while he thanks his Saviour for it, let him “ rejoice in hope of the glory of God ! ”

My book will find out individuals of this description ; and may (through the goodness of God, to whose blessing I humbly commend it !) prove the means of “ building them up on their most holy faith.” I wish them to make it a Family book. On every Sabbath-day, there is some hour unoccupied by the public services of the Church : during that hour, let their children and servants be gathered together, to hear one of these Short Sermons. The simple reading of it will not detain them for one quarter of the time that I have named : but there will be found, at the foot of the page, many references to those parts of the Bible to which the Sermon alludes ; and it would be an employment, at once interesting and profitable, for the children to look out some of the texts referred to, and afterwards commit them to memory. Moreover, when God, by the preaching of his word, has spoken to the family, let the family then speak to Him in prayer ; “ commending them-

selves to the Lord, in whom they have believed."

To you, then, in the first instance, my Parishioners and friends, I dedicate this Volume. But I am not without a hope, that it may prove more extensively acceptable : that other families may use it, in the manner which I have recommended to you ; and that those friends of the poor, the ignorant, and the sorrowful, who are prompted by "pure and undefiled Religion" to "visit them in their affliction," may here find the elements of Christian Instruction ready prepared for their use ;—in so short a compass, as not to burden the attention, and in a style which all may understand.

Believe me to be, my dear friends,

Your faithful and affectionate

Servant in the Gospel,

JOSEPH JOWETT.

March, 1835.

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## SERMON I.

---

JOHN iii. 16.—*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

‘HEAR what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith, unto all that truly turn to him!’—One of this description was at the very time standing before him. Nicodemus had come to profess his faith, that Jesus was “a teacher sent from God.” And he was sincere in this profession. But his faith was also very feeble, and his apprehension of divine things dark and confused. Our Lord therefore treats him as a child; not fully explaining the doctrines at which his new disciple stumbled, but fastening upon his attention a few striking truths, which might afterwards be digested by slow degrees, as the Spirit of God should enable him. Hence you will find, that almost every verse in this discourse contains one distinct sentence—designed at one time to awaken, at another to encourage, his hearer.—My text is of the latter description. At that moment, Nicodemus could scarcely enter into the glorious consolation which it contains. Subsequent events have made it plainer; and it will be our own fault, if, in meditating upon it, we fail to “understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cvii. 43.

These words, then, declare unto us,

I. THE SOURCE OF OUR SALVATION. It originated in the love of God the Father—"God so loved the world!"

We are sometimes in danger of overlooking this. We speak of the Father's justice, holiness, and truth; and of the Son as removing his anger from us, by satisfying that justice. All this is right; yet it must not be so understood, as though the Son had prevailed on the Father to do that, which he was reluctant or unwilling to do of his own accord. No—the Scriptures invariably represent him as the first mover in the work. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he *loved us, and sent his Son* to be the propitiation for our sins."<sup>1</sup> It was "the kindness and love of God towards man" which appeared, when "according to his mercy he saved us . . . through Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> In these passages, the Father's love is set forth, as having first designed that salvation, which the love of the Father and of the Son united to accomplish.

Our Lord dwells upon this love, as something peculiarly worthy of observation. "God *so* loved the world!" And was it not indeed singular—marvellous?

When was love more *condescending*? What were we? dust, ashes, worms! And in whose heart was compassion towards us excited? in the heart of Him who is higher than the highest!—When was love more *unmerited*? It was kindness to those who had rebelled against lawful authority, and marred God's most glorious work; who had taken part with apostate angels; and who, when even tried and convicted, did not "make supplication to their judge."<sup>3</sup>—When was love more *free*? What God hath since bestowed through Christ, is in fulfilment of covenant engagements

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Titus iii. 4—6.

<sup>3</sup> Job ix. 15.

—in recompense of the Redeemer's merit. But what inducement was there for his entering into such engagements? Why should he have begun to devise any way of salvation at all? For all this, no motive can be found, but his own free love. He was bound to nothing—could gain nothing by saving us, which he possessed not already—could lose nothing by abandoning us to our well-deserved fate. Nothing but love, then, could move him to the step which he took; love, never to be fathomed—ever to be adored by us.

II. THE PRICE OF OUR SALVATION is here declared.—What was given that we might be saved? “He gave his only begotten Son!” It is that only begotten Son himself who tells you so.

There are several considerations here, to shew the value of this astonishing gift.

1. Christ was his Father's “SON.” This title, whatever else it may mean, (and we know that in it are contained mysteries far beyond our comprehension) undoubtedly implies *dearness*. God must have loved his Son, at least as much as he “loved the world.” We are assured that he did so. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”<sup>1</sup> “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.”<sup>2</sup> Before he came upon earth, he “was in the bosom of the Father.”<sup>3</sup> “I was by him” (saith Wisdom, personating him) “as one brought up with him; I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him,”<sup>4</sup> —equally loving and beloved by him.—For, moreover,

2. He was the Father's “only begotten Son:” not a stranger, adopted to some privileges of the family; but a son by birth—of the same nature—and inheriting by right all that belonged to his Father. Nor had

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 17. <sup>2</sup> John iii. 35. <sup>3</sup> John i. 18. <sup>4</sup> Prov. viii. 30.



he any to share with him those rights and that affection. God has many adopted sons—but one only begotten. Having given him, therefore, he could give no more. And yet,

3. The Father did actually “give” this his Son; his love for the world appearing to overbalance, for a time, his affection to his only begotten. To spare us, he spared not him!

But, in order to see the value of this gift, think what it was, to which the Father delivered him up, and under what circumstances he parted with him? Did he merely go “to receive for himself a kingdom and return?”<sup>1</sup> to “take on him the nature of angels?”<sup>2</sup> or if to visit man, was it with the certainty that “they will reverence my Son?”<sup>3</sup>—Let his history tell! God gave his Son to poverty, to persecution, to the contempt of man, to the treachery of false friends, and the cruel injustice of enemies. He gave him—to die! not accidentally, through the malice of the wicked—but intentionally, according to his own decree, and their mutual covenant. A sacrifice of atonement was wanted, such as none could make but God’s incarnate Son. The Son was willing—would the Father consent? Yes! the plan was his own; and he shrunk not from its accomplishment. “When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”<sup>4</sup>

In short, there were doubtless many ways, by which God might have shewn great love to a fallen world: but none could ever have equalled this! no gift could compare with this unspeakable one—“He gave his only begotten Son!”

<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 12.    <sup>2</sup> Heb. ii. 16.    <sup>3</sup> Matt. xxi. 37.    <sup>4</sup> Gal. iv. 4, 5.

III. THE EXTENT OF OUR SALVATION is in proportion to the price given for it. The breadth of it reaches from hell to heaven. "That we might not perish," was the first object; "that we might have everlasting life," was the second.

1. That we "*might not perish?*" What means this? that we might escape the death of the body? If so, Christ has been given in vain! No—it is the death of the soul which alone is worthy to be called "*perishing*"—everlasting damnation—"the worm that dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched."<sup>1</sup> And this the whole world had deserved; nay, we were in fact sentenced to endure this; when Christ stepped in as Mediator, "between the dead and the living," between the law and its victims—"and the plague was stayed."<sup>2</sup> All mankind for a season are reprieved, and perish not, in virtue of the gift of Christ; and of a part of mankind he has declared, "They never *shall* perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."<sup>3</sup>

2. That we "*might have everlasting life*"—not merely deliverance from woe, but exaltation to glory. And this by various steps. There is, *first*, The life of God's favour—present, free, entire forgiveness, with adoption into his family: *secondly*, The life of God's Spirit—quickening the dead soul, and uniting it to the living Vine, that it may "bring forth fruit unto God:" *thirdly*, The life of God's presence, in which "there is fulness of joy, and pleasures at his right hand for evermore."<sup>4</sup> All these are included in the term "*salvation*;" with every thing, here or hereafter, that is worthy to be called a blessing; "no good thing will he withhold from those,"<sup>5</sup> whom he saves through his only begotten Son.

<sup>1</sup> Mark ix. 44.    <sup>2</sup> Num. xvi. 48.    <sup>3</sup> John x. 28.    <sup>4</sup> Psa. xvi. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

And who are *they*? A most important question, surely! 'What must I do to be one of them?'—The text answers by pointing out,

IV. THE APPLICATION OF THIS SALVATION.—To whom is it given? It was love to the whole world which "gave" the Saviour; do all therefore gain everlasting life? No, these alone—"whosoever believeth in him"—in the only begotten Son of God.

The Faith which lays hold of salvation is the simple act of relying on Christ's merit, and on the promises of God through him. But many things are requisite to prove it genuine. It must be penitential—self-despairing—affectionate.—Blessed be God! WHOSOEVER thus cometh unto Christ, him he "will in no wise cast out."<sup>1</sup> The door is open to the vilest. If a sinner be but willing to have what Christ offers—that is, the life of God's favour, the life of God's Spirit, and the life of God's presence—the privilege is unlimited. "Whosoever will, may take of the water of life freely."<sup>2</sup>

This is the Gospel—"the glorious Gospel of the blessed God;"<sup>3</sup> the "good news from a far country," more refreshing than "cold water to the thirsty soul;"<sup>4</sup> the "glad tidings of great joy,"<sup>5</sup> which angels descended from heaven to proclaim. According to the grace given unto me, I have once more preached it in your ears. But oh, remember its awful sanction—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned!"<sup>6</sup> Take heed, then, that you be "not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. i. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Prov. xxv. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Luke ii. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Mark xvi. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. x. 39.

## SERMON II.

---

**MATTHEW v. 25, 26.**—*Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

OUR Lord had been urging the duty of prompt and immediate reconciliation with an injured brother; but these solemn words allude to another and a more dangerous quarrel.—Let us consider,

**I. THE ADMONITION HERE ENFORCED.** “Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him.”

Adversaries of various kinds are spoken of in the Bible. Of some, we are exhorted to have no fear; for “the adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces.”<sup>1</sup> Against others, we are directed to pour out fervent prayers: hence David says, “For my love they are my adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer.”<sup>2</sup> With one, in particular, we are to make no terms whatsoever: “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, stedfast in the faith;”<sup>3</sup> and shortly he shall be “bruised under your feet.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 10.    <sup>2</sup> Ps. cix. 4.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.    <sup>4</sup> Rom. xvi. 20.

There can be no doubt respecting the *Adversary* with whom we are here admonished to come to an agreement. It is God—our Creator, Owner, and Sovereign. By ten thousand ties are we bound to obey, glorify, and please him. Refusing to do this, we have made Him (who should have been our best Friend) our most dangerous Enemy. “If ye will not hearken unto me, but walk contrary to me, then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I will chastise you seven times for your sins.”<sup>1</sup> Such is his awful declaration—such his threatening against those who, by wicked works, set themselves up as his adversaries.

Have you never thus “walked contrary” to God? Yes, times without number!—Oh that you would now bethink you of your ways, and turn your feet unto his testimonies! For behold, O Sinner, how the Divine Adversary is here represented as already prosecuting thee, for the injury which he has received at thy hand. “*Thou art in the way with him.*” He has already pronounced thy sentence—he hath his hand upon thee—and every moment brings thee nearer to thy deserved fate. Do not think that he has forgotten thine offence, or is neglecting thy punishment. It may be more or less distant; but it approacheth—and the way thou art taking is the way to it. As it may daily be said to the true Christian, “Now is thy salvation nearer than when thou believedst;”<sup>2</sup> so to the unreconciled sinner—Now is thy curse nearer; “thy judgment lingereth not, thy damnation slumbereth not.”<sup>3</sup>

This Adversary is *in the way with thee*, however, in a far different sense. While he draws thee towards thy deserved punishment, he is also tenderly entreat-

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xxvi. 21—28.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xiii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Peter ii. 3.

ing thee to enter into terms of agreement with him. "Come now," he says, "let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Do you ask, 'How can this be?' Are you saying, 'Oh, if I could but hope that God would no longer be my Adversary, I would instantly cease from my enmity against him?' Why, all the difficulty and hindrance, O Sinner, is on thy side! God is willing enough, if thou be willing. He has himself provided the satisfaction for those offences: he has "found a Ransom"<sup>1</sup> for thy captivity. There is thy Surety, standing by the cross—nay, hanging upon it! "The chastisement of thy peace" has been laid upon Jesus;<sup>2</sup> and now he is continually in *the way with thee*, saying, "Be ye reconciled unto God."<sup>3</sup>

AGREE, then, with this jealous, but at the same time condescending Adversary.—And how must you proceed, in order to cement the agreement?

1. *By humbly admitting the Truth of his charge against thee.*—This is indispensable. While there is any remainder of self-defence, excuse, and palliation, you continue exposed to that awful word,—"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper."<sup>4</sup> No—take for your pattern the case described by your Adversary himself, in Levit. xxvi. 40—42. Imitate David—"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."<sup>5</sup> Take the penitential language of Job—"Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea twice, but I will proceed no further."<sup>6</sup> Thus confessing, with the

<sup>1</sup> Is. i. 18.<sup>2</sup> Job xxxiii. 24.<sup>3</sup> Is. lxi. 5.<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.<sup>5</sup> Proverbs xxviii. 13.<sup>6</sup> Psalm li. 4.<sup>7</sup> Job xl. 4, 5.

Prodigal, "I have sinned," you will be in a hopeful way for meeting with the Prodigal's welcome to a Father's arms.

2. *By faithfully accepting the free Reconciliation which he offers.* Dream not of making satisfaction thyself! Say not, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all!" Do you know what that *all* amounts to? It must be something equal in value to Jesus Christ—with all his holy obedience, all his atoning agonies, all his meritorious work. All these were required, for the salvation of even a single sinner: and, therefore, if thou must needs make amends for thy own offences, thus much must be done, suffered, and merited by thee. Who does not at once perceive, that the redemption of his soul, on these terms, is impossible? "it ceaseth for ever."<sup>1</sup> Be content, then, to accept freely what is freely offered by thy Lord. "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me."<sup>2</sup> That *strength* of the Lord is Christ—"Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God."<sup>3</sup> "Believe in him, and thou shalt be saved."<sup>4</sup> Believe that he is able, and thou shalt find that he is willing, "to save even to the uttermost them that come unto God by him."<sup>5</sup> Take Christ in thine hand, "whiles thou art in the way" with thine adversary; and for his sake God will "receive thee graciously, will love thee freely, and his anger will at once be turned away from thee."<sup>6</sup> The Reconciliation will be complete: and from that blessed hour thou wilt walk with him as a friend, cordially consenting to his service, and delighting in his ways.

Do you hesitate? Are you too proud—too unbelieving—too much in love with sin? Then hear, secondly,

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xlix. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xxvii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 2, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xvi. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrews vii. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Hosea xiv. 2, 4.

II. THE FEARFUL CONSEQUENCES OF REFUSING AN IMMEDIATE COMPLIANCE. Even if no explicit declaration of those consequences had been made, yet, knowing the Adversary to be our offended Creator, we must have trembled at the thought of rejecting this agreement : for “ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ! ”<sup>1</sup>—But in fact, we are not left to form our own anticipations. He here forewarns, that

*The Adversary will deliver thee to the Judge.*—When God knows that the mercy of his gospel is finally rejected, he puts his warrant into the hands of Death, to bring the criminal before his bar ; and the warrant is instantly executed. With that man, the day of grace is at an end. He must now answer for his offences, before a Judge, whom none can deceive or escape. Do you ask his name ? It is He, who once appeared as a Saviour, and for whose sake God was desirous of being reconciled : but now, “ He hath given him authority to execute judgment also.”<sup>2</sup> And he “ will render unto every man according to his deeds.”<sup>3</sup> Do you ask, ‘ When ? ’ It will be at some time, certainly : and the text says, that it may be *at any time* ; this week—this night—this moment !

*The Judge will deliver thee to the officer.* For, at his command, “ the Angels shall come forth, and shall sever the wicked from among the just.”<sup>4</sup> Equally prompt are they, whether as heralds of mercy, or ministers of wrath. No hesitation will be found on their part ; no reluctance, no pity ;—and such power ! Remember that, in a single night, one of these officers “ went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand ” men !<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews x. 31.<sup>2</sup> John v. 27.<sup>3</sup> Romans ii. 6.<sup>4</sup> Matt. xiii. 49.<sup>5</sup> 2 Kings xix. 35.



*Thou shalt be cast into prison—the prison of hell—a place of woe and torment unknown ; “ where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”*<sup>1</sup>  
—Hopeless bondage ! for

*Thou shalt not come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing :* which is all one with saying, NEVER ! for the penalty of sin is eternal ; and will therefore be always paying, never paid off. Our state even on earth would be equally desperate, but for the mercy set before us in the gospel. There however, his mercy will be “ clean gone for ever.”<sup>2</sup> No more invitations, to those who slight the present warnings ! no more sermons—convictions—strivings of the Spirit ! only “ blackness of darkness for ever !”<sup>3</sup>

And remember—

HE IS FAITHFUL, who speaketh this word : it is the Son of God himself ; and he enforces it with his own solemn “ Verily !”

HE IS STRONG, who executeth this word : for “ who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ?”<sup>4</sup> Yet once more,

HE IS MERCIFUL, who delayeth this word : not “ slack,” indeed, “ concerning his promises” or his threatenings, “ as some men count slackness ; but he is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”<sup>5</sup> “ Therefore also, now saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart !”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mark ix. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm lxxxvii. 8

<sup>3</sup> Jude 13.

<sup>4</sup> Mal. iii. 2.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Peter iii. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Joel ii. 12—14.

### SERMON III.

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**I CORINTHIANS X. 4.**—*For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them ; and that Rock was Christ.*

THE Apostle is here making a comparison between certain points in the history of the Jews, and certain general privileges of the Christian Church. For instance—the Israelites began to be a separate people, when, on leaving Egypt, they passed through the Red Sea : this the Apostle calls, in allusion to the first Christian Sacrament, being “ baptized unto Moses.” Again, they had some things resembling the other Sacrament : they were fed with manna ; they drank water from a rock.<sup>1</sup> These things were not only a relief of bodily wants, but also representations of Christian privileges—“ spiritual meat,” “ spiritual drink.”

And the design of St. Paul’s remarks on the subject was, to shew the Corinthian Christians, that neither their baptism, nor their participation in the Lord’s Supper, would avail them anything, without a true, penitential, godly faith in that Saviour, whom the Sacraments represent.

On the present occasion, I would call off your attention awhile from the Apostle’s general reasoning, to the single expression in my text—“ That Rock was Christ.”

<sup>1</sup> Read the history—Exodus xvii. 1—7.

In what respects did the rock at Horeb represent Christ?

I. IT FOUND THE PEOPLE PERISHING WITH THIRST.

Only a few days probably were gone by, since the overthrow of their enemies in the Red Sea. Six hundred thousand fighting men, beside women and children, had now to begin the journey to Canaan; when behold, the road they have to pass is found to be a mere desert! No corn-fields—no springs—nothing but a vast, sandy, howling wilderness. The consequence, if not prevented, was obvious; they must soon be famished and die, from hunger and thirst.

Now this is a just emblem of our spiritual condition by nature. *We* are thus destitute of all that can sustain, refresh, or satisfy the soul.—The mass of mankind know not, indeed, what it is that can alone satisfy their thirst; but they do not the less feel its torment. They are driven this way and that way, by “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye”<sup>1</sup>—ever seeking some satisfaction, which they never effectually find—trying to deceive themselves with the name and form of happiness, but still conscious that the thing itself is an undiscovered blessing.—A few, by God’s mercy, discern the true reason: they are taught to thirst for his pardoning and converting grace—they see that this is what they want, and they cannot rest without it. But even they, for a while, know not where or how to seek it; till at length their very soul fainteth within them. This, this is their daily cry, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”<sup>2</sup>

Have you this sense of spiritual thirst? do you

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xlii. 1, 2.

feel, that nothing earthly can content you ? Oh that you may feel it !—you are then prepared to welcome Christ, and his life-giving waters of salvation.

## II. The rock in Horeb WAS A MOST IMPROBABLE MEANS OF RELIEF.

I know indeed that, in countries like our own, the springs of water generally take their course along a rocky bed below the surface of the ground. But in those sandy deserts the case is far otherwise. The rock of Horeb was a large mass of stone, projecting above ground ; it only increased the desolation of the prospect, and confirmed the previous appearances of complete barrenness and drought.

And such were the gloomy anticipations of many, to whom Jesus the Son of Mary offered himself as their Redeemer. *Scribes and Pharisees* were offended at his personal meanness—the son of a carpenter ! no worldly show ! “ No form nor comeliness ! ” <sup>1</sup> “ How shall this man save us ? ” <sup>2</sup>—*His own disciples* were continually stumbled ; and at last they seem to have despaired of help from him ; on his apprehension, “ they all forsook him and fled. ” <sup>3</sup> “ We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel. ” <sup>4</sup>—*Learned Gentiles* heard with scorn, that one executed as a malefactor was to be received as King of the world ; and his religion seemed to them as a mere piece of “ foolishness. ” <sup>5</sup>—Nay, even to this day, Christ is a Saviour from whom men will hope nothing, expect nothing, and therefore seek nothing, till they are compelled. Though guilt upbraids, though the broken law threatens, though sin and Satan urge their cruel tyranny within the heart, men will still try to save themselves—nay, many will go without salvation—rather than come to Christ. A

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah liii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. x. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxvi. 56.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xxiv. 21.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23.

simple faith in Jesus, for full pardon, and for renewing grace, appears so improbable a method, that very few can be induced to make the trial.—Again,

III. IT REQUIRED TO BE SMITTEN, ERE IT GAVE A SUPPLY.

The rock was at hand, but there it might have remained to this day, a witness and a monument of the universal death of that vast congregation, had not Moses, by divine command, raised his rod and smitten it : then indeed, “ the water gushed forth, and the streams overflowed.”<sup>1</sup>

And how exactly did this action typify the suffering Redeemer of souls ! It was not by his wonderful miracles—no, nor by his heavenly instructions—that Jesus provided salvation for us ; but by his sufferings and death. Some persons seem to regard his death as the termination of his merciful labours—and as brought about merely by the wicked hands of wicked men. But this was in fact the one great work, for which he came into the world. All the rest was but secondary, and preparatory to this. Moreover, his enemies, wicked as their own intentions were, only fulfilled what God’s hand had determined before to be done. Read the whole fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, noticing especially those words,—“ It pleased the Lord to bruise him,” and—“ by his stripes we are healed.”—Read also Zech. xiii. 7.—Not only therefore Christ *was* smitten ; but he *was to be* smitten. He himself once asked, “ Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ? ”<sup>2</sup>—Here then let us fix our attention ? “ Behold the” wounded “ Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ! ”<sup>3</sup> And while you still are amazed at the mystery of this condescension, say with St.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiv. 26.

<sup>3</sup> John i. 29.

Paul, " God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"<sup>1</sup>

IV. IT YIELDED A SUPPLY, ABUNDANT, EFFEC-TUAL, LASTING.

For such a host as was encamped there, no ordinary stream of water would be required: but here was enough and to spare; and it satisfied every parched tongue, for the murmuring instantly ceased. Nay more, it appears to have *followed* them for forty years, in all their wanderings. Once indeed, towards the end of that period, the supply of water was again suspended—to try their faith, and to shew their unbelief: but it flowed again from another rock, at the command of the Lord; when Moses incurred his displeasure by again smiting, where he should only have spoken.

And such, brethren, is the supply of spiritual blessings, which is treasured up in Christ Jesus. " For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."<sup>2</sup> His Gospel contains the most ample resources for our peace, consolation, holiness, hope, gladness, and victory over spiritual enemies. Yes! whatsoever good thing thy soul lusteth after, all is to be found in Christ.—Moreover, whom he supplies, he satisfies. Not but that the believer is still thirsting for more; but he thirsts for nothing else—for he finds that the water of life is " drink indeed,"<sup>3</sup> filling him with happiness, inconceivable and glorious.—And shall he fear that the spring will ever cease and be dry? He ceases to be a true believer, if he admit such a thought, " Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."<sup>4</sup> Having loved his own, he loves them to the end; carries them safe through the wilderness—guards them in their passage over Jordan—welcomes them to the Canaan where he himself dwells; never intermitting

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 14. <sup>2</sup> Col. i. 19. <sup>3</sup> John vi. 55. <sup>4</sup> Hebrews xiii. 8.

the "spiritual drink," until they reach the "land flowing with milk and honey."

Finally, the rock in Horeb represented the Saviour of sinners, in that

V. IT SAVED THE LIVES OF REBELS, IF THEY WOULD BUT DRINK.

The Israelites were those rebels : for oh ! how provoking to the Lord was that distrust, which led them to murmur at the first approach of difficulty, after they had had such distinguished proofs of his power and love in delivering them from Egypt ! Yet he pardons even this, and gives the relief they need.

In like manner, every thought and deed of ours in quest of happiness, till we come to Christ, is rebellion against God. Our looking to the creature for help, is idolatry : our discontent is murmuring against the all-bountiful Father. Nevertheless, even to rebels like us, Christ is still calling, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink !" <sup>1</sup> What marvellous grace !—But take heed lest this grace should, after all, be lost upon you, by your refusing or neglecting to come to him. You may behold the life giving stream, may admire it, may recommend it ; but what avail, if you yourself still let it pass untasted ? "Repent then, and believe the Gospel !" <sup>2</sup>

And above all, while you use the tokens of this grace, which have been appointed by Jesus Christ, beware lest you overlook, as thousands of Israel did, the thing signified. While you say of the Holy Communion, 'That Sacrament is Christ—that bread is his body, that wine is his blood'—see that ye be not content with only the visible bread and wine. 'FEED ON HIM in your heart by faith, with thanksgiving ;' and may he be to you spiritual food—"meat indeed, and drink indeed !"

<sup>1</sup> John vii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Mark i. 15.

## SERMON IV.

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JEREMIAH iv. 14.—*How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee ?*

ON the first hearing of these words, apart from the connection in which they stand, you might naturally suppose them to be the language of indignant impatience and displeasure ; but they are in truth dictated by a more compassionate feeling. They come in as a pathetic remonstrance, interrupting the course of some of the most awful threatenings. In the midst of these alarming declarations, the pity of the Lord interposes for an instant with this pathetic expostulation—“ O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness : how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee ? ”

I shall first shew you what are vain thoughts ; and then endeavour to enforce the solemn inquiry of my text—“ How long ? ” And may He, who so manifestly speaks to us in mercy, enable us meekly to listen to his words, and constrain us by his love !

### I. WHAT ARE VAIN THOUGHTS?

1. The most obvious idea implied by these words, is that of *unprofitable imaginations*. What a torrent of these foolish thoughts is continually streaming through our minds ! We may remember it in our childhood—we may still behold it in the children growing up around us ; the whole employment of the



mind, when not forced to apply itself to something useful, is to ruminate on idle wishes, and foolish schemes.—And though the body grows, does not the mind retain much of the same childishness even in our riper years? Hence the love of novels, plays, and dissipation of every kind; hence all that “foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient,”<sup>1</sup> but which, nevertheless, fill the whole conversation of many people.—Again,

2. *Unscriptural opinions* must also be included under the term, “vain thoughts.”—Indeed, what thoughts so vain as those, which exalt themselves against God, and against the revelation which he has given?—I do not however allude to the vain infidel, who denies altogether the truth of Scripture; I refer rather to those who acknowledge its truth, but explain away its meaning. When, for example, men declare that their ‘hearts are good,’ while the Scripture calls them “desperately wicked,”<sup>2</sup>—that Jesus Christ was a mere man like ourselves, when the Scripture calls him “the mighty God,”<sup>3</sup>—that sin is but a slight evil, which God will very easily overlook, though the Scripture calls it “exceeding sinful,”<sup>4</sup> and promises death for its wages,<sup>5</sup>—that spiritual conversion is a ‘needless’ thing, an ‘impossible’ thing, an ‘absurd’ thing, when the Scripture says, that without it we “shall not enter into the kingdom of God,”<sup>6</sup>—that a sinner may save himself by amending his life, or by charity to the poor, or by frequenting his church and sacrament, when the Scripture says, that there is “no name under heaven whereby we can be saved,”<sup>7</sup> but only the name of Jesus Christ; what are all such notions, but “vain thoughts?” what, but a setting up of

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 4.<sup>2</sup> Jer. xvii. 9.<sup>3</sup> Isa. ix. 6.<sup>4</sup> Rom. vii. 13.<sup>5</sup> Rom. vi. 23.<sup>6</sup> Matt. xviii. 3.<sup>7</sup> Acts iv. 12.

our own foolish wisdom, against the wisdom of God, and even his plainest declarations ?—Again, none will deny, that

3. *Unholy desires* come under the same head. Evil thoughts are assuredly the vainest of thoughts. But what a host of them find admittance to our minds ! Even when the outward conduct is fair and specious, what a “cage of unclean birds,” is the inward man ! Lustful wishes and imaginations—thoughts of pride and vanity—desires of revenge—covetousness—malice—envy—ambition—sensual desires of every kind ; all these come and go with little restraint through the mind of man—who still pleads ‘not guilty,’ when charged by God’s word as a heinous sinner ! Is it not a vain thought to suppose, that God sees not these abominations ? that he will never bring them into judgment ? that they can either profit thee in this world, or escape everlasting misery hereafter, unless they be repented of, and by divine grace forsaken ?—Our list of vain thoughts however will not be complete, unless we include among them,

4. *Unseasonable ideas* ; thoughts, not vain or sinful in themselves, but which become so, by being admitted at unseasonable times and places. A far greater number of our thoughts are sinful and vain from this cause, than from any other. Do you want instances ?—Recollect, if you can, what has been the course of your thoughts since you have been in this house of prayer.—I speak in this matter, as in all the other cases, from painful experience. I know that even the most spiritual have reason to lament the distractions and wanderings of their heart in duty ; but *they* feel that such wanderings are sinful, and that nothing can put away their guilt, but renewed

applications to "the blood of sprinkling." <sup>1</sup> What then must be the awful state of those hearts, who encourage these vain thoughts ! who excuse and palliate them ! and who feel no remorse, because only God's eye can behold them !

Now observe some other expressions in our text respecting these vain thoughts.—They are "thy" vain thoughts: *thine*, for they are natural ; so much so, as to be almost unnoticed: *thine*, O sinner, for thou choosest them, delightest in them, and wilt not renounce them when pointed out to thee.—Moreover, they "lodge within thee;" not like travellers that tarry for a night, but like welcome guests that make themselves quite at home. Yet they are trespassers and intruders; for thy heart belongs to another, who ought to dwell there. It is his temple; <sup>2</sup> but thou hast banished him and he is gone, and thou art now giving harbour to his enemies.

Such is our state universally by nature ; in such a state thousands wilfully continue ; such is too much the condition even of those, who do in some good measure obey the command, "My son, give me thy heart!" <sup>3</sup>

## II. Let me now endeavour to ENFORCE THE SOLEMN INQUIRY, "How long?"

Some of you, I would hope, have begun to feel the sinfulness of these vain thoughts;—yet it is certain, that none labour against them as they ought.—The question therefore is simply this, How long will you allow the present state of things to go on?

1. *Shall it be till some temporal judgment be sent to awaken you out of your carnal security?*—for be

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 24.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 17 ; vi. 19.    <sup>3</sup> Prov. xxiii. 26.

it known to you, that, even in this life, God does not always suffer himself to be mocked with impunity. If his gracious "rod and staff" may not guide thee, his awful scourge must drive thy soul. For this purpose he has many messengers at his command;—affliction, want, diseases, are at any moment ready for his use. And I have heard people vainly wishing that God would employ such means of awakening them. Alas! they know not what they ask. God may send such a stroke as to confound, not to convert thee; such a stroke as may drive thee to despair, but never bring thee to Christ. Oh rather listen now to his gracious voice, which intreats thee to "wash thine heart from wickedness; for how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

2. *Shall it be till habit rivets these vain thoughts, and makes repentance and conversion harder than ever?* What a foolish choice! yet how certain is this consequence of delay!—for there is no principle of our nature more constant than this growth of habit; and fearful indeed are the effects of it on the heart. Hence we find, that no impenitent sinners are more hopeless than the aged. The mind can then learn nothing new—the affections love nothing new—the will practise nothing new.—And this state comes on, not all at once, but gradually. If you should still be the slave of vain thoughts a year hence, you will be more under their power, than you are now;—and in like manner, every succeeding year, or day, will strengthen the chains of your bondage. Will you then suffer them so long to lodge within you?

3. *Shall it be till the grieved Saviour forsakes thee, and the resisted Spirit ceases to strive with thee?* That is a case which may happen sooner than thou art aware. "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him

alone!"<sup>1</sup> "Because they received not the love of the truth....for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."<sup>2</sup> Art thou waiting for this? Awful idea! Thou dost start with horror from the bare supposition; and yet what other meaning can be put upon thy refusal to part with thoughts of wickedness?

4. *Shall it be, till the sentence goeth forth, Cut it down! why cumbereth it the ground?*<sup>3</sup> Millions have done this;—wilt thou be added to their number? Such will assuredly be thy lot, if these vain thoughts be still indulged. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy."<sup>4</sup>

I speak these things to the careless worldling—to the wilful sinner—to the formalist—to the backslider. Even to the faithful Christian the warning will not be without its use: and he will thank me for it, when it has shewn him the value of that collect of our Church—'Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hosea iv. 17. <sup>2</sup> 2 Thes. ii. 11. <sup>3</sup> Luke xiii. 7. <sup>4</sup> Prov. xxix. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Communion Service.

## SERMON V.

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HEBREWS xii. 5.—*And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children ; My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.*

THE heart of man, when exercised with affliction, is ever prone to extremes.—The extreme of hardihood is the sin of those, who, not believing in God, have no fear of his power. A defective view of God's character leads to the opposite sin of despondency. Between these two extremes, He, who knoweth what is in man, steps in with the twofold exhortation referred to in my text.—Let us examine its several parts in their order.

### I. DESPISE NOT THOU THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD.

No one can doubt, that this word *chastening* refers to the various afflictions and troubles which befall us in the present life. It is equally certain, that of such afflictions every man has his share. It would be a waste of time were I to particularize. Every "heart knows its own bitterness."<sup>1</sup> I only beg that you will call to mind your own special trouble at this time ; in order that I may warn you against the sin here forbidden—the sin of despising the chastening of the Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs xiv. 10.

You are guilty of this—

1. *When you shut your eyes to the Author of your affliction.* “Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?”<sup>1</sup> Assuredly not. Every thing that takes place in the whole universe, comes to pass: either by his direct appointment, or by his equally direct permission. And yet, though few would refuse to acknowledge this undeniable truth, men act as though it were false. Hence anything is named, rather than God, as the author of their trouble. “It was a chance that befel us!”<sup>2</sup> it was the ignorance or malice of an enemy! it was my ill-luck—I am always so unlucky! It was my being in such a place—at such a time—in such a person’s company? Thus do men “labour in the fire for very vanity,”<sup>3</sup> to find out something which may draw off their thoughts from God as the Chastiser. According as it is written—“Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see!”<sup>4</sup> Oh let not such wilful blindness be yours; lest the next words also be applicable to you—“but they shall see, and be ashamed; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.”—You are guilty,

2. *When you inquire not the Cause of your affliction.* God “does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.”<sup>5</sup> If therefore he sends chastisement upon you, there must be some adequate cause; which you are bound to search out and discover. Job has set you the example; “I will say unto God, Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me?”<sup>6</sup>—You should at the same time put the question to your own heart. The very word chastisement, will tell you what answer to expect. Who ever hears of chastisement, without thinking of misconduct—transgression—

<sup>1</sup> Amos iii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. vi. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Hab. ii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah xxvi. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Lam. iii. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Job x. 2.

sin? If, in your affliction, you think not of your guilt, you are evidently despising the chastening of the Lord. Many do this. They seem to think it a proof of noble spirit, not to take blame to themselves, or to be cast down at their troubles. They call it fortitude and manliness. Such fortitude might become an innocent being (were it possible for him to be a sufferer): but can it be suitable for a sinner—a sinner under the chastening hand of Him whom he has disobeyed, offended, provoked? Is not this to “despise” him?—You are guilty,

3. *When you resist the Design of your affliction.*—Of the two former faults you may perhaps, to a certain degree, be not guilty. It may be, that you own the hand of God; you may even confess that you have deserved to suffer. Does it necessarily follow, then, that God’s design is accomplished? By no means. What is that design? Let Moses tell—“to humble thee, and prove thee; to know what is in thine heart, whether thou wilt keep his commandments or no:”<sup>1</sup> that is, (not to inform himself—for he knoweth all things—but) to bring thee to a serious decision and determination of thine own heart. You have long, perhaps, been convinced, that you ought to forsake sin, and turn wholly to the Lord. But sin has still kept its hold on you; and you have loved the world, and “set up idols in your heart,”<sup>2</sup> and resisted the conviction of your conscience. At length, then, God interrupts your comforts—puts bitterness into your cup of pleasure—pours contempt upon your idols; or he comes even closer—chastises you with bodily sickness, sorrow, and pain. “All these things worketh God oftentimes with man—that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man;”<sup>3</sup> not

<sup>1</sup> Deut. viii. 2.<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel xiv. 3.<sup>3</sup> Job xxxiii. 29. 31.



merely that pride which he is apt to feel toward his fellow-creatures—but that which keeps him back from godly repentance, and faith in Christ, and newness of life. Now if a man still resist this design, when God afflicts, as well as when he invites and entreats ; if a man still say, “No—I have loved strangers, and after them I will go ;”<sup>1</sup> if he is more concerned to obtain relief from his trouble, than spiritual good from it ; we have surely cause to say to that man, “Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord !”

But perhaps you feel the force of all that has been said—and feel it so strongly, as to be overwhelmed with dismay, not only at your present afflictions, but at the apprehension of still greater sorrows, which you are conscious of having deserved. To you then, the text says,

## II. FAINT NOT, WHEN THOU ART REBUKED OF HIM.

I shall not enlarge on the different ways, in which men faint under the rebuke of God in his chastisements. The general idea is sufficiently plain. Either from exclusive views of God’s holy and strict justice, or from inordinately dwelling on their own guilt and ill-deservings, the afflicted sometimes sink into a state of hopeless despondency. “All these things are against me !”<sup>2</sup> ‘God is against me ; my own conscience is against me ; the world is against me ; the word of God is against me ; the Gospel itself seems all against me !’ Such are the feelings of the fainting soul—mingled, at the same time, with many a rebellious and hard thought of God, as though he were the severe and cruel tyrant, who would not care if his servant should perish.

Is this the language, is this the feeling, of a Christian heart? What ! have you then “forgotten the exhor-

<sup>1</sup> Jer. ii, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis xlii. 36.

tion which speaketh as unto children, "MY SON! faint not, when thou art rebuked of him?" Pause awhile, and reflect what is implied in this address.

It shews, that

1. *Although God be the Author of your sorrows, it is as a Father that he sends them.* "He that spareth the rod, hateth his Son; but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes:"<sup>1</sup> the more genuine the affection, so much more prompt the chastisement. Now if this hold true with earthly parents, it may well be expected in the case of Him, who "so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son"<sup>2</sup> for them! Be assured, therefore, that it is love which regulates all your afflictions—their number, their circumstances, their weight, their continuance. These things are a part of his mercy covenanted in Christ Jesus. The same fatherly kindness declared, "If thy children forsake my way, I will visit their iniquity with the rod and their sin with scourges;" which then immediately added, "Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take away, nor suffer my truth to fail."<sup>3</sup>—"Lift up, then, the hands which hang down."<sup>4</sup> All is not against you. Your heavenly Father is for you—and, if you trust him, will make these "light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."<sup>5</sup>

2. *Although sin be the Cause of your sorrows, yet those sorrows are not the special penalty of sin.* They may distress and scorch you—but you are not "tormented in this flame."<sup>6</sup> Earth is not Hell! Your Father is correcting you, rather than punishing you. What! can any thing you now suffer, be at all compared with your deserts? No, indeed; those who receive the

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xiii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> John iiii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lxxxix. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. xii. 12.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Luke xvi. 24.

wages of sin, must look for very different fare. No ! all these afflictions, though called for by sin, are yet the gentle strokes of One, who would save you from eternal woe ; and therefore, though they must be received with seriousness, they must not be the occasion of despair. Let them teach you indeed to hate sin—but at the same time to love and trust him, who will not let you slumber and perish in it.

I may add another remark :—

3. *Although conversion be the Design of your sorrows, yet it was never intended that these should be the only means used by the Lord ; and that you should be left to do all the rest. That would indeed be an Egyptian service—the full tale of bricks demanded, while straw was withheld, and stripes inflicted. No—God does not always chide. The very expression, “when thou art rebuked,” implies that other methods are also employed. He gives “grace for grace”—a Saviour to pardon—a Spirit to heal—promises, innumerable and precious, to encourage and strengthen and save your soul. Only look to him in faith—meekly “turn to him that smiteth you”—and he will make all things straight and plain before your face.*

## SERMON VI.

---

GENESIS v. 23, 24.—*And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*

IN this chapter we have the only record that remains of nine generations of men, who lived between Adam and Noah. Nothing is told respecting them but their birth, their names, their ages, and their deaths. At Enoch, however, the pen of the historian pauses for a moment, to tell of his holy character, and his singular end; and so delightful is the account in a real Christian's estimation, that St. Paul cannot pass over this brief memorial, without giving to Enoch a special place among those worthies, who through faith "obtained a good report."

The subject has even now lost none of its interest, although it refers to matters that occurred more than five thousand years ago. Enoch's CHARACTER is recorded for our imitation: his END, for our encouragement. Let us meditate on both: and may his God and ours, teach us to profit thereby!—Here is,

I. ENOCH'S CHARACTER. He "walked with God."

This was not his original, or natural character. Without being specially informed, we should have known that he too was born in sin, "a child of wrath, even as others."<sup>1</sup> And this seems to be intimated

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 3.

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by the language of the two preceding verses;—  
 “*Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuselah, three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.*” For sixty five years he merely lived—lived to the world, and to the flesh. Then a change took place. He began then to walk with God; and persevered in this blessed course, for the remaining three hundred years of his life.—Now what does this imply? It implies,

1. *Resemblance to God.*—There must have been some similarity of disposition between them, for such an intimacy to be formed, and to last so long, between the creature and his Creator. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”<sup>1</sup> Even a heathen can tell us, that friendship can only exist, where there are the same likings and dislikings.<sup>2</sup> Now Adam had this resemblance to God *naturally*; for “in the image of God made he man;”<sup>3</sup> but he lost it *sinfully*, and then propagated his own corrupt nature—which was all that Enoch inherited from Adam. Wherever, therefore, this resemblance is restored, it is by a new and heavenly birth:—Enoch, at sixty-five, was “born again of the Spirit,”<sup>4</sup> and became “partaker of the Divine nature.”<sup>5</sup> So must you, if you would have God your friend. There can be no “walking with God,” till this change takes place. God desires it, but you dislike it; as Adam hid himself, the very first time God came to walk with him after his fall.<sup>6</sup> Have you experienced this change? Are God and you like-minded? If not, it is you that must alter—he cannot. Oh, then, ask of him his regenerating Spirit; and never rest, till you begin truly to love

<sup>1</sup> Amos iii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Idem velle, atque idem nolle. *Sall.*

<sup>3</sup> Gen. i. 27.

<sup>4</sup> John iii. 5.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Peter i. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis iii. 8.

what he approves, and to hate whatever is displeasing to him.—Again, the character given of Enoch implies,

2. *Confidence in God.*—A man must know his companion, and then he will be familiar with him.—‘And how could Enoch know God? he had never seen him—no man can!’ No—but he had his word, by which he was informed of his real character; and, knowing this information to be from God, he believed it, trusted in it, acted on it. St. Paul tells us on what his faith was fixed: “He had this testimony, that he pleased God; but without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”<sup>1</sup> So then, the existence of an unseen God, his approachable and gracious character, his fidelity, these were what had been revealed to Enoch; and he credited the Divine revelation, against all that sight and sense might pretend, or Satan suggest. Oh that Adam had exercised the same confidence! This is however a vain wish; let me rather say—Oh that *you* would thus act, and not “make God a liar,”<sup>2</sup> by believing the world and carnal reason, in opposition to his sure word. You cannot “walk with God” if you will not trust him; you can have no interest in his salvation, if you will not heartily believe “the record which he has given of his Son.”—This walking implies, further,

3. *Communion with God.*—Friendship may indeed exist without intercourse, where such intercourse is impracticable; yet the want of it will be felt as a grievous misfortune, and it will generally extinguish ordinary attachments. But, blessed be God for a

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John v. 10.

Mediator, through whom we may "have access with boldness,"<sup>1</sup> at all times, and under all circumstances. Enoch might not know so clearly as we, who this Mediator is; but he had all the benefit of the privilege. God, as a reconciled God, "drew nigh" to him, and he "drew nigh"<sup>2</sup> to God.—And this, not merely in public worship—if there was such a thing in that abandoned age; not merely in his regular morning and evening worship, in his family, and in his closet; but constantly, hourly. The heart of him who walks with God, is evermore ascending up in spiritual communion; expressing itself, not always in words—often in "groanings which cannot be uttered."<sup>3</sup> I dare say this sounds strange to many of you—it may serve to shew how far you are from walking with God.—Lastly, the character before us necessarily includes,

4. *Zeal for God.*—A man thus, like Enoch, habitually conversing with him whom he resembled, and in whom he trusted, could not be indifferent to the honour of his Friend. The world around him, he could not but see, was divided into parties; the one *for* God, and the other *against* God. With which of these would he side? Surely he must needs espouse God's cause, however few might join him. Others might walk in their own proud way, their own sensual way, their own Atheistic way; Enoch would still take God's way, and walk with *him*. We have proof that he did so, in the prophecy which he delivered. (See Jude 14, 15.) We are not told what such a course of proceeding cost him:—we know what is the cost of it now; hatred, contempt, reproach, enmity, unkind words, and more unkind behaviour. The question however is, Dare you encounter this for the honour of your God and Saviour? If not, you must not call

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 12.<sup>2</sup> James iv. 8.<sup>3</sup> Romans viii. 26.



him yours; if otherwise, it is one evidence that you are walking with him, and he with you.

And now, as an encouragement to believe that you will not thus "fear God for nought,"<sup>1</sup> hear the account which is given us of

II. ENOCH'S END. "He was not; for God took him." The first of these expressions states the case as men beheld it; the second, as God effected it.

1. "*He was not.*"—"He is gone at last—this troublesome preacher! gone, too, sooner than we could have expected—not more than three hundred and sixty five years old!" Then some might add—"There was a strange story about his being taken up to the sky and disappearing! No matter, if he is but gone!"—Now suppose that in point of fact nothing more was known than this; yet even then, how happy, if rightly considered, would have been Enoch's end!

"He is not" any longer subject to pain, sickness, infirmity, sorrow; all of which are still the portion even of those who walk with God in this vale of tears. "He is not" any longer tempted by Satan, by the world, by his own fallen nature, to sin against his kind Friend and Saviour; and thus his heaviest burden is removed. "He is not" any more "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked,"<sup>2</sup> with the dishonor cast on his God, with the "triumphing of the wicked."<sup>3</sup> "He is not" spared to see their ungodliness proceeding to that gigantic pitch, which at length brought upon them the flood of waters to destroy all the earth. *They* might see no blessing in his departure; not considering that "the righteous is taken away from the evil to come."<sup>4</sup> But to Enoch, and to every faithful believer even now, a depar-

<sup>1</sup> Job i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Job xx. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. lvii. 1.

ture from this life is gain; were it only on account of the evils to which it puts an end.

But did Enoch die the common death of all men? No! "he was not," for

2. "*God took him*:" that is, (as St. Paul, speaking by inspiration of God, explains it,) "He was translated, that he should not see death."<sup>1</sup> Whether he was carried up to heaven, like Elijah, before few witnesses, or in a more public manner, we are not informed. Doubtless the fact became known; and was intended as a testimony that he whom men despised, and most probably persecuted, was one who had "pleased God."

In our day, there needs no such miraculous testimony. And yet, even now, the servants of Christ die not as other men. His disciples "sleep in Jesus."<sup>2</sup> As "God took" Enoch, so doth Christ "come and take them to himself, that where he is, they may be also."<sup>3</sup>

Will this be *your* end, my brethren? have you this "blessed hope?"<sup>4</sup> In other words, Are you now "walking with God?" Ah, brethren, "many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things."<sup>5</sup> I fear that some of you may be in that awful case. Oh make haste to escape! Come to God by Christ; begin henceforth humbly to walk with him, and with his people; and the day is not far distant, when, in a better world, you shall be numbered with those who "walk with him in white, for they are worthy."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews xi. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 14.

<sup>3</sup> John xiv. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Titus ii. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Phil. iii. 18, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. iii. 4.

## SERMON VII.

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LUKE xiv. 15.—*And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.*

OUR blessed Lord, in the preceding chapter, had been delivering the parable of the Prodigal Son; at the close of which, the elder brother is represented as taking offence at the undeserved kindness shewn by his father to the Penitent. The father contents himself with shewing, that his elder son had no just ground for complaint. In this chapter, however, our Lord teaches the self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees (for they were “the elder son”), that they had little reason to pride themselves on their imaginary goodness. They were unfaithful “stewards,” seeking only their own selfish interests. They were lovers of money,<sup>1</sup> even while pretending to be the servants of God.—He did not speak all this in plain words: but the consciences of his hearers made it intelligible. “The Pharisees also, which were covetous, heard him; and they derided him”—not outright, perhaps—but (so the word means) they *sneered at* him. Looking at each other, they agreed in thinking him both foolish and ridiculous, for thus affecting to despise what all mankind so universally desire.—Then he made the

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 13. *Mammon* means Riches.

solemn reply (the more awful from its calmness) in the text: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God."

A due consideration of these words will enable us, by God's blessing, to

### I. DETECT A COMMON ERROR.

The error to which I allude is, Taking the opinion of men as the rule of our conduct.—Why did the Pharisees sneer, when our Saviour was talking against covetousness? Because they knew that they had the world on their side; and this satisfied them that their conduct was right. They could "justify themselves before men," and they cared for nothing further.

Now that we may be led to examine ourselves, I shall shew you how continually this conduct of the Pharisees is acted over again; and may God give us grace so to judge ourselves, that we may not be judged of the Lord.—The approbation of man, then,

1. Is the standard by which people are guided *in the choice of their conduct*.—I do not mean to say, that before they enter on any particular course, men deliberately sit down and calculate how much praise they shall get from their fellow-creatures. Such vanity as this would be universally condemned; and yet you will find, that the conduct of most men has no higher object, than the giving of satisfaction to others. It is this which leads a child to gratify his parents—a servant, his master—and a friend, his friend. Without ever suspecting our real motives, we are continually accommodating our manners and conduct to those around us. Hence our morality takes the colour of the society we live in, and seldom rises to a higher level. The poor and the

rich, the vulgar and the noble, the tradesman and the farmer, have each their several standards of right and wrong; and the *one* sees no great harm in doing many things which would never be countenanced by the *other*. If certain sins are abstained from, it is because they are discreditable—if duties are performed, they are reputable duties. This in fact is the grand principle—more or less disguised from our own hearts—‘I must do as other people do!’—Again, I observe, that this also

2. Is the ground of men’s satisfaction *when reviewing their past conduct*.—Try them with a reproof for something they have done amiss: the natural principle of self-defence immediately sets them upon justifying what they have done. And this is not to be blamed. If they can shew that the reproof is unfounded, so much the better: but the question is, By what standard do they satisfy themselves that all is right? Why you find, that they immediately begin to quote the example or the opinion of others in their own line of life. Their conduct is ‘common,’ is ‘tolerated,’ is ‘admired.’ The reproof then goes for nothing.—Confirm it by a text out of the Bible! It is well if you are not sneered at; for if men “derided” Christ, much more will they deride you. But if not, it will still be evident that they are not disturbed by having the Bible against them, if kept in countenance by their own world. Observe that expression—*their own world*. There is the fashionable world—the learned world—the farming world; yes, and also the religious world. Many wrong things may be found *there* too, because we are content with the praise and approbation of man.

Thus, whether in determining what they *shall* do, or in justifying what they *have* done, we see how common it is for men to be guided by the opinions of men; instead of anxiously and carefully studying that infallible

standard, the HOLY SCRIPTURES. Nay, what is still worse, they will even distort and explain away the clearest declarations of the Bible, when those declarations contradict or condemn what the world approves.

My brethren, "the heart"—your heart, and mine—"is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:"<sup>1</sup> and therefore it is not likely that you should at once believe that your motives are so hollow, as has been described. I only say, Suspect and examine yourselves; and may God in his mercy "lighten our eyes that we sleep not in the death"<sup>2</sup> of self-justification and self-delusion!

But now, having detected this common error, I am led, in the next place, to

## II. EXPOSE THE FOLLY OF IT.

The folly of "justifying ourselves before men," and being content with their approbation, appears from three considerations.

1. *God, and not man, will be our Judge hereafter.*—The conduct which I have been describing is like that of a party of men accused of high treason, chained in prison, and awaiting their trial. Imagine them to be talking over together the circumstances in which they are placed, and assuring each other, that all they have done was perfectly right, just, and proper—not indeed quite agreeable to the law, but such as every one of their companions must approve. The Assizes at length arrive; the trial begins. Who is their judge? is it one of themselves?—Who form the jury? some fellow traitors?—What is the standard of appeal? *their* opinion, or the sneered-at law? You easily reply. Then make the case your own. "WE MUST ALL appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah xvii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xiii. 3.

every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”<sup>1</sup> Oh what folly, then, to be guided by any opinion of what is right and wrong, except that of the God before whom you must stand ! Oh what madness, not to study and follow that marvellous book—now in your own possession, and to be made the standard of appeal in the last day—which tells so plainly what you ought to have been, what you are, and how only you may be justified in the sight of God !—Again,

2. *Man’s judgment of conduct is, in general, directly opposite to that of Almighty God.*—How very strongly is this asserted in my text ! “That which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God !”—Proofs might easily be multiplied. Men “highly esteem” the covetous, if they be not oppressive. Men “highly esteem” the pleasures and amusements of the world, if they be not excessively indulged in. Men “highly esteem” the bold spirit of the pitiless warrior, the diligence of the thorough-paced worldling, the pride of honour.—A case of this kind is immediately given by our Lord, in his parable of the rich sensualist, and the miserable but pious Lazarus. See there how different is the judgment of God from that of man ! One of these men was every thing that the world admires ; wealthy, splendid, luxurious,—nay, charitable also—for there is no reason to doubt that Lazarus obtained what he asked, “the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table.” But see this rich man in another world, “lifting up his eyes in hell, being in torments.” Men formerly applauded, and he could “justify himself before *them*”—but not before God. He confesses, by asking only one drop of water, that he had deserved his punishment.—Once more,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 10.

3. *God's judgment reaches far deeper than man can ever pretend to.*—If the opinion which men form of our conduct were always just, yet they can judge only of what they see. But far the greater part of our conduct is out of sight—in the heart. There, in many a man who “outwardly appears righteous” before the world—there, I say, Sin reigns without a rival, uncontrolled, unseen. Lust, revenge, envy; hatred of God’s law, of God’s people, of God’s service; all this might be discovered, in many a bosom where it is at present scarcely suspected, if we could look beneath the surface.—But does no one see this? Yes—God sees it. And Jesus Christ saw it, when he said, “God knoweth your hearts.”

Now, my brethren, whatever our heart is, that only are we. What avails it therefore that men approve, (who know us not, because they know not our hearts,) if we fall short of His approval, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid?

Brethren! I have not this day been “preaching the Gospel” to you; but endeavouring to make you see your need of the Gospel.—If men cannot know your real character, that is no excuse for your not knowing it yourselves.—Look, then, into that den of iniquity, your heart. Try yourselves as God will try you hereafter; and you will soon cry, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” Thus will you be in the way to obtain that true justification through Christ, of which the self-righteous Pharisee falls short;—“being justified by his blood, you will be saved from wrath through him.”



## SERMON VIII.

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2 TIMOTHY i. 5.—*When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee ; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice ; and I am persuaded that in thee also.*

LET us look up to God for his spiritual teaching, while I endeavour to set before you

I. THE PECULIAR EXCELLENCE FOR WHICH TIMOTHY IS HERE COMMENDED : “ Unfeigned faith.”

Many—even among those who regard *religious* excellence as that which alone deserves commendation—may think the language of St. Paul respecting Timothy to be somewhat strange. They would have spoken of his piety, or his zeal—his strict attention to duty—his admirable example as a young man. And I do not mean to say, that such statements would have been inconsistent with truth. Nevertheless, they would have fallen very far short of the description given in two words by the Apostle—which itself would not satisfy the persons of whom I speak.

St. Paul goes to the root of all that was excellent in Timothy ; namely, his FAITH.—Not but that he could at other times dwell with pleasure on the fruits of that faith ; especially when speaking of him to others. A beautiful specimen we have in Phil. ii. 19—22. “ I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded, who will

naturally care for your state : ye know the proof of *his* that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me the gospel." But in writing to Timothy himself, I think it most profitable to insist upon the source of the excellent character—his faith.—What then is Faith? The same Apostle explains ; " Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. " Without faith it is impossible to please God : for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Timothy, then, habitually realized the fact, that there is a God ; that he must be diligently sought ; and that none can seek him in vain. Before he had heard the Christian doctrine, he had learned this from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. From the Apostle he learned that God must be sought "*in Christ*,"<sup>2</sup> and would in Christ only be found. It was at Lystra, probably that he first heard this doctrine. He saw Paul stoned and left as dead for preaching it ; he saw him restore again, and as zealous as ever in the same cause. By the time that the Apostle had proceeded to Derbe, and returned again to the scene of his former persecution Timothy was become a Christian. He now believed that Christ was his Saviour, " God over all, blessed for evermore,"<sup>3</sup>

Do you believe this ? ' Yes,' you say ; ' I also am a Christian. Like Timothy, I have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; and I believe firmly all the articles of the Christian faith.'—Very good ; but how shall we know that this is a true account of your character? St. Paul's description of Timothy shews that faith may be *feigned*, not real and genuine ; and if this might be the case in those days of " fiery trial," how

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 6.<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.<sup>3</sup> Rom. ix. 5.

much more so now, when Christianity is the national religion; when, too often, infants are baptized almost as a matter of course; when it is disgraceful, not—to profess ourselves Christians, but to profess ourselves unbelievers!—See to it then, that your faith be like that of Timothy, “unfeigned faith.” To ascertain what that is, see in the New Testament what real faith does. It “worketh by love;”<sup>1</sup> it “purifieth the heart;”<sup>2</sup> it “overcometh the world;”<sup>3</sup> it makes a man “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord;”<sup>4</sup> it brings “Christ to dwell in the heart;”<sup>5</sup> it makes its possessor speak for Christ, live for Christ, forsake all for Christ, yea even die for Christ. Now will your professed faith stand this test, and come up to this standard? If not, it is all a pretence, a fiction, a fancy: the devil and your own heart have imposed upon you the shadow for the substance. “Faith without” such “works is dead, being alone.”<sup>6</sup> “Make therefore the tree good, and the fruit” shall be “good;”<sup>7</sup> seek to possess faith unfeigned, like him whom St. Paul here so affectionately commends.—But observe now,

II. THE INSTRUMENTAL CAUSE TO WHICH THE FAITH OF TIMOTHY IS HERE ASCRIBED: namely, the previous faith of his pious mother Eunice, and of his grandmother Lois.

The only *effectual* cause to which unfeigned faith can be ascribed, is the grace of Christ, and his Spirit. To Him the Apostles prayed for faith,<sup>8</sup> and he gave it them; and St. Paul expressly declares, that faith “is the gift of God.”<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, in conferring this

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 6.<sup>2</sup> Acts xv. 9.<sup>3</sup> 1 John v. 4.<sup>4</sup> Phil. iii. 8.<sup>5</sup> Eph. iii. 17.<sup>6</sup> James ii. 17.<sup>7</sup> Matt. xii. 33.<sup>8</sup> Luke xvii. 5.<sup>9</sup> Eph. ii. 8.

precious gift, the Lord frequently works by instrument or means; and therefore I conceive that the case of Lois and Eunice is here introduced as the instrument, cause, or the means employed by the Holy Spirit for producing in Timothy his unfeigned faith. The case of these excellent women, then, may lead us to observe the special honour conferred on the sex, in their being often made

1. *Foremost in faith and piety.*—Man fell by woman's transgression; but it is by the Seed of the woman that he is redeemed. This singular favour, early revealed, appears to have been early and gloried in by the sex. Hence the Saviour is called by Daniel, "the Desire of women."—The faith, which led the ancient mothers to hope that they might become parents of the Redeemer, was in many ways manifested by women, while men were generally unbelievers. Women attended Jesus, and ministered to him of their substance; women found him near Jerusalem; women stood by his cross when he was crucified; women followed him to his grave—and were the first to witness his resurrection. The first convert in Europe was a woman—Lydia. In every period of the history of the Church, women have been more open to conviction, more simple believers in Christ, more zealous in their zeal for his cause, than others. Let them be encouraged then. Men may despise them, and be their tyrants, when they should be their protectors. But let the woman come to Christ, he will be her friend; he will give her grace; he will withhold from men who despise it; "choose the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty."<sup>1</sup>—For it appears, that women are often made to be

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 27.

2. *Foremost in spiritual usefulness.*—Such they were in the case before us. Loïs the grandmother had been “an Israelite indeed ;”<sup>1</sup> one of those that “waited for the consolation of Israel ;”<sup>2</sup> one, like Anna, “looking for redemption in Jerusalem.”<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, she has a daughter, Eunice, whom she labours to bring up in the same way of “faith unfeigned ;” and God blesses the endeavour. In due time the daughter is married, and becomes a mother ; her son Timothy, from his very childhood, is by her “trained up in the way he should go”<sup>4</sup>—made acquainted with the Holy Scriptures.<sup>5</sup> And what is the result ? When grown older, he departs not from the right way. You might almost have said here, that religion ‘ran in the blood’—had not Scripture expressly informed us, that God’s children are “born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”<sup>6</sup> No—this remarkable succession of piety, in three generations of the same family, was a blessing from God, in honour of female faith—“unfeigned faith.” “Them that honour me,” saith God, “I will honour.”<sup>7</sup>

And you may still enjoy the same privilege, of being foremost in usefulness, O ye Mothers, grandmothers, and sisters in Christ !—On you it devolves in a peculiar manner to form the character of children. If you be worldly, light, idle, immodest, or despisers of the sabbath and the church, scarcely anything will be able to counteract the evil which you will thereby do to the souls of your families. If, on the other hand, you be humble, modest, pious, lovers of prayer, of the church, of God’s own day—in a word, *unfeigned believers*—God will own and bless your example and instruction to the spiritual good of these little ones.

<sup>1</sup> John i. 47.    <sup>2</sup> Luke ii. 25.    <sup>3</sup> Luke ii. 38.    <sup>4</sup> Prov. xxii. 6.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15.

<sup>6</sup> John i. 13.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 30.

Only be stedfast in faith—not impatient. How soon you may succeed, I know not. Timothy, indeed, appears to have been pious from a child. Whether his mother was so, may perhaps be doubted; for I find that she had married a heathen husband<sup>1</sup>—almost breaking her mother's heart, perhaps, and making her think that she was lost to God. This, very likely, was the beginning of worldly trouble to Eunice, but of spiritual blessings. Now sprang up the seed sown by Lois; and Eunice no sooner has a son herself, than she sows it again, with quicker success.—Despair not, therefore, ye Christian mothers; your work may be overlooked by man, but it shall not be forgotten by Christ—by him who loved the little children, and said, “Suffer them to come unto me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.”<sup>2</sup>

Have any mothers, here present, lost this golden opportunity? Are you mourning over wicked sons and daughters, who in their childhood were not taught the good and the right way? Let this humble you in godly repentance; but still come to Christ in faith unfeigned, for a free pardon.

Have any young persons slighted the privilege? God will require it at your hands! King Manasseh bitterly smarted for despising the example of his godly parent; yet he was brought to true repentance, at the close of a long life of sin: but when his son Amon sinned like him, he was cut off at once, as a warning to all future despisers.<sup>3</sup>

Do any regret, that they possess not the privilege of having pious parents? Yet do not despond. Seek God for yourselves, and you shall find it as true in spiritual as in temporal things—“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvi. 1. <sup>2</sup> Mark x. 14. <sup>3</sup> 2 Chron. xxxiii. <sup>4</sup> Ps. xxvii. 10.

## SERMON IX.

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MARK iv. 40.—*How is it that ye have no faith?*

SELDOM had the disciples of Jesus been in a situation more calculated to try their faith, than when these words were addressed to them by their Divine Master. After a day of unusual exertion in preaching the Gospel, our Lord had desired them to convey him across the lake of Gennesaret; and so great was his fatigue, that he appears to have instantly laid his head upon a pillow, and fallen fast asleep. While he was in this insensible condition, a great storm of wind arose—the waves beat into the ship—and it was beginning to fill with water. He was awakened at length by the cries of his disciples; who were so overcome by terror, that they even accused him of indifference to their safety: “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” He first relieves their fears. “He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still! And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” But he will not allow those fears to stand as an excuse, for their distrust of his kindness. Even in this trying situation, he reproves their unbelief: “Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?”

In applying this reproof for your instruction—it is indeed too applicable to us all! I shall consider it,

I. AS BRINGING A SERIOUS CHARGE. It is a charge of unbelief—“Ye have no faith!”

There are two distinct classes of men, who in very different ways stand chargeable with having no faith.

1. *Unbelievers, in whom there is absolutely no faith at all.*—Do not suppose, that in this class I reckon none but Infidels and Atheists. No, my friends; many assume the name of Christian, who will never be owned as such in the great day of account. Now you must be aware, that it is not what a man calls himself, but what he really is, that decides his character in the sight of God. And by this just mode of reckoning, many a person will be found destitute of faith, who never suspected himself of being an unbeliever.

Examine yourselves. Do you really credit the Scripture testimony concerning the evil of sin, and God's hatred of all iniquity? "Do you believe that there is 'a lake of fire'<sup>1</sup> prepared for 'the wicked'—for all 'who forget God?'"<sup>2</sup> And do you think that there is truth in the declaration which saith, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God?"<sup>3</sup> Ask yourselves again, whether you believe in the doctrine, that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost;"<sup>4</sup> and that this Son of Man was also Son of God—God himself in our nature? Do you believe, moreover, that his salvation is an "unspeakable gift"<sup>5</sup>—that his love "passeth knowledge"<sup>6</sup>—and that he is able to "save you from your sins," to save "even to the uttermost?"<sup>7</sup>

No! many among you have no faith at all in these truths. And I will tell you how I know it. If you believed in your own sinfulness, you would be full of sorrow—shame—fear—anxiety; but you are not so. Denial or excuse are your replies to the charge. If you believed in the wondrous love of God, and the grace of Christ, we should see you eager to secure it,

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xx. 14.    <sup>2</sup> Psa. ix. 17.    <sup>3</sup> Rom. iii. 23.    <sup>4</sup> Luke xix. 10.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 15.    <sup>6</sup> Eph. iii. 19.    <sup>7</sup> Heb. vii. 25.



and full of admiration, gratitude, and Christian love, when it was obtained : it could not be otherwise, if you had faith. But is this the state of your affections toward God your Saviour ? Ask your own heart—and let it convince you “ of sin, because you believe not on him.”<sup>1</sup> The real truth is, that worldly, unconverted people—whether they be gross transgressors, or more decent and moral persons—give no sincere credit to the word of God ; they have no such faith, as influences the heart, and regulates the life.

But again, this charge is applicable to

2. *Believers, in whom there is no faith, proportioned to what might be expected of them.* Of this class were the disciples. They were believers ; for they had for Christ’s sake left father and mother, and all earthly possessions. Yet so feeble and scanty did their faith appear on this occasion, that Jesus reproves them as though they had none ; “ How is it that ye have no faith ? ”

Often, very often, do real Christians merit a like reproof.—Is there before me a true believer, who is suffering distress and affliction ? I will hope, that you make some endeavours to “ cast your care ”<sup>2</sup> upon God ; but is it not too much in the tone of the disciples—more like complaint and distrust, as though you thought he would “ not care if you perished,” than a simple and steadfast reliance on his wisdom and goodness ? Again—is your conscience clouded, and peace a stranger to your bosom, because of the load of former guilt ? Now I know that you profess to regard Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour from condemnation : nevertheless, is it not manifest, that you do not faithfully apply the merit of his blood for the removal of your burden ? You are rather seeking for some improvement in your own nature,

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter v. 7.

which may be your ground of hope, instead of Christ. Again—the power of temptation is like a storm in your soul: at one time you are inattentive to it—is not this through want of faith in its danger? at another, you despair of resisting and overcoming it—is not this through want of faith in the remedy? “My grace,” saith Christ, “is sufficient for thee:”<sup>1</sup> how little have you of true faith, when you talk of your peculiar circumstances and difficulties as being such, as to render sin more excusable, or holiness less practicable, in you, than in other Christians! Yet are not these vain imaginations too frequent even in the minds of real believers?—Well may the Saviour exclaim, with regard to many among us, “How is it that ye have no faith?”

But let us now consider these words,

## II. AS SUGGESTING AN IMPORTANT INQUIRY.

“How is it?” what can be the reasons, that the great bulk of mankind are so totally unmoved by God’s truth; and that even real believers are such poor proficients in the school of faith?

It were easy to explain the whole mystery, by referring to the sinful corruption of our nature; which remains still, even in the regenerate. But for practical purposes—that is, for discovering the practical remedy—it will be well to give some more particular answers to this inquiry.—“How is it?”

1. *Because most men are wilfully ignorant, what things they ought to believe.* “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”<sup>2</sup> You all acknowledge, that the Bible alone is the source of religious truth—the foundation of saving faith. Yet, strange to tell! few persons can be brought to “search the Scriptures.”<sup>3</sup> Even the facts and histories of the Bible

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Romans x. 17.

<sup>3</sup> John v. 39.

are, I verily believe, scarcely known by most people. The doctrine is seldom inquired into. All you expect from the Bible is, that it should tell you your duty : and this (you are vain enough to think) you sufficiently know already, without looking any further. Now while this neglect of the word which God speaks continues, faith is impossible : you have nothing to believe : we need not ask, " How is it that *you* have no faith ? "

2. *Because you take it for granted, without careful examination, that you are true believers.* You were born in a Christian land—baptized—confirmed ; you say the Creed often ; you never have listened to the lies of the Infidel or the Scoffer ; you are ready to confess the truth of every thing contained in the Bible. And this you consider to be Christian faith ! not remembering, that by its fruits alone is faith to be discerned. Bible truths are not a mere list of facts, which you may agree to, and then immediately forget. To believe them is to feel them—to stand in awe of them—to love them—to make them the guide of our path, the source of comfort, love, peace, and joy. Now if you are content, without experiencing these effects, to persuade yourself still that you have faith, you shew not only your blindness, but the very reason why you have no faith : SELF-SATISFIED, you are ignorant at once of its nature and its value.

3. *Because you seek not true faith, as the special gift of God, by continual prayer.*—Many who take some pains in religion, are more intent on increasing their knowledge, than on gaining divine grace and strength. If what they read of God and Christ be fully proved, and clearly true, they never doubt of their power to believe it. But—whatever may be the case in other things—in things pertaining to God it does not necessarily follow, that evidence produces belief. Unbelief is the child of an evil heart, not of an ignorant mind ;

hence spiritual grace is necessary, to make us believe the simplest truths of the Bible. Do you then pray daily—"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" "Lord, increase my faith!" Give me the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the understanding heart!—All these things are from God alone;<sup>1</sup> and he "will be inquired of"<sup>2</sup> for them. See to it, therefore, whether this be not the cause of your having no faith—"you have not, because you ask not."<sup>3</sup>—It is, once more,

4. *Because you do not sufficiently stir up the gift of God, when once it is within you.*—You have had solemn seasons of deep conviction, and realizing faith in things unseen. But you suffer them to pass away unimproved. You do not labour to keep near to God: the Holy Spirit is grieved, and departs. Oh set more value on his precious visits! "Feel after Christ and find him,"<sup>4</sup> more and more. Imitate that "blessed people," who "know the joyful sound" of his gospel, and who "walk in the light of his countenance;"<sup>5</sup> otherwise your faith will soon wither, fail, and die.

And now let me ask you—

Is the state which has been described an INNOCENT one? How can it? to disbelieve the living and true God!—Is it a SAFE state? Assuredly not! seeing that all power is in his hand; and he is a jealous God!—Is it an INCURABLE one? No, thank God! Use but the proper means—study of the Scriptures—self-examination—prayer; and you have every encouragement to hope, that you shall attain to "the faith of God's elect."<sup>6</sup> With Christ for your teacher, there is not a single lesson which may not be learned—and so learned, as to "yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness,"<sup>7</sup> even "quietness and assurance for ever."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xx. 12. <sup>2</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 37. <sup>3</sup> James iv. 2. <sup>4</sup> Acts xvii. 27.  
<sup>5</sup> Psal. lxxxix. 15. <sup>6</sup> Titus i. 1. <sup>7</sup> Heb. xii. 11. <sup>8</sup> Isa. xxxii. 17.

## SERMON X.

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PSALM ciii. 1—5.—*Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

IN this world of tribulation and distress, the grand remedy against corroding care is thus prescribed by the Apostle Paul—"In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."<sup>1</sup> The prescription, you may observe, does not merely look forward to the hope of future good, to be obtained by *prayer*; it has also a backward look, to mercies already received; and on these we are directed to dwell with *thanksgiving*, in order that grateful thoughts of the past, connected with cheerful hopes for the future, may the more effectually lighten our present burden.

Among other grounds for thankfulness, we have great reason to praise God for the many examples of this excellent spirit recorded in holy Scripture—and more especially in the Psalms of David.—One beautiful specimen of his grateful love to God is here before us in my text. May that Holy Ghost, who "anointed"

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 6.

David to be "the sweet Psalmist of Israel,"<sup>1</sup> enable us (like him) to reflect upon

I. THE MANY BENEFITS WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE LORD.

"All his benefits," the Psalmist would fain commemorate; but a task like that were hopeless, as he himself, in another place,<sup>2</sup> acknowledges—"they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."—It is, however, a goodly catalogue of benefits, which he here within the compass of three verses enumerates, as having been bestowed on himself.

1. He "*forgiveth all thine iniquities.*"

King David, you see, knew that he was a sinner, as well as you and I. Here, moreover, he felt that his greatest wants lay: no benefit could do him good, till his "iniquity was forgiven, and his sin purged."<sup>3</sup> And he knew that it *was* forgiven—all of it! And he knew also, that, when he should again commit iniquity, God would again "restore his soul"<sup>4</sup>—would bring him back by the rod, but would still forgive.—'How could he know all this?' He learned it by faith, laying hold of God's general promises: he saw it in the blood of sacrifices: he patiently waited for, and steadfastly trusted in, the Christ that was to come.

O ye doers of iniquity, that Christ is come at last; and if you turn to him in godly sorrow and steadfast faith, *your* sins too are freely "forgiven you for his name's sake."<sup>5</sup> Oh come to him for this benefit! See your need of it—ask it—claim it—accept it! If you do this sincerely, it is yours: you may now say to your soul—'God, for Christ's sake, forgiveth all thine iniquities.'

<sup>1</sup> 2 Samuel xxiii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xl. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah vi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm xxiii. 3.

<sup>5</sup> 1 John ii. 12.

Till this grand benefit is obtained, you have no right to look for any other. But, with this, all the rest will follow; as, for example—

2. *He "healeth all thy diseases."*

David's thanksgivings in this Psalm are supposed to have been called forth by a recovery from some dangerous disease.—It well becomes those, who have experienced such deliverances, to be very thankful to that gracious and almighty God, who alone can "heal our sickness."—But he can, and does, perform greater cures than these. The health of the soul is of far more importance; and its diseases far more dangerous, than any which afflict the body. Those diseases are, fatal ignorance—a depraved taste—sinful passions—a crooked will—a hatred of the good Physician—a love of death. These are in themselves incurable: but wherever the Lord forgives iniquity, all these diseases are healed; his love through Christ confers the former benefit—his spiritual grace effects the latter. David had experienced this. His spiritual constitution had been changed; and though the old evils would from time to time break out afresh, still the cure was proceeding, and was sure to be complete at last.—Have you any such evidence that *your* iniquities are forgiven? Is your heart also changed? and can you doubt who hath done this, or to whom your thanksgivings are due?

3. *He "redeemeth thy life from destruction."*

God had recently delivered his servant from going down into the pit.—Yet this, at the best, was but a temporary redemption. David well knew, what has since taken place, that, within a little while, death could no longer be kept aloof—that he must inevitably lay down his life in the grave. But he was assured of a more glorious redemption hereafter. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine

holy one to see corruption : ”<sup>1</sup> “ I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. ”<sup>2</sup>—And such honour, brethren, have all his saints. By the death of Jesus, Death is swallowed up in victory. “ If we believe that he died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him, and they shall ever be with the Lord. ”<sup>3</sup> The destruction of life must take place—but the life shall be redeemed from it. The soul indeed of the pardoned believer never dies ; but even his dead body shall live again—an incorruptible, spiritual, and glorious body.

4. *He “ crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.”*

Here is revealed to us the source of all our blessings. The dealings of God towards his forgiven, are all dealings of love—merciful acts, flowing from a tender and loving heart. Like a circling crown, they encompass the believer on every side : or, like a crown of dignity set on his head, they shew the distinguishing estimation in which the Lord holds his redeemed servant : or they are a crown of victory ; implying that, through the Divine Redeemer, all his enemies are conquered, and can harm him no more for ever. And in these respects, David’s benefit is but a pattern to all, who have the same God and Saviour ; “ he that is feeble among them shall be as David ”<sup>4</sup>—surrounded by perpetual mercies, and secured by the same tender love which assures every faithful soul, “ He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye. ”<sup>5</sup>—Once more,

5. *He “ satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”*

“ Give us this day our daily bread ”<sup>6</sup>—such is the prayer dictated by our kind Teacher ; and in this matter

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xvi. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xvii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 14—17.

<sup>4</sup> Zech. xii. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Zech. ii. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew vi. 11.



he far exceeds what the terms of the petition lead us to expect. Nay, whether we ask or not, "he giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth for ever."<sup>1</sup>—But there are choicer dainties, and more nourishing food; enjoyed by those only, whose "iniquities are forgiven." Earthly food is but a short relief, to hunger which soon recurs again. The consolations of God in the soul are a "well of water, springing up into everlasting life."<sup>2</sup> The gratification of earthly food is mean, sensual, and sordid; rather satiating than satisfying. The consolations of God fully satisfy, never surfeit; they communicate joy, health, vigour, light, and gladness.

Here is an allusion to the eagle. Like all other birds, it annually moults its feathers, appearing to renew its youth by that means; but, unlike them, it does this for many successive years—being understood to be one of the most long-lived. So the servant of God, by daily gifts of grace, renews his spiritual strength. Age, impairing other things, still finds him flourishing. Death itself does but render his graces more complete, by transplanting him to the paradise of God.

Such are the benefits enjoyed, not by David alone, but by every servant of the Lord.—If pardoning and converting grace has made them yours, now reflect upon

## II. THE GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS WHICH THEY DEMAND.

Take the Psalmist as your pattern.

1. *Recount in your prayers the instances of the Lord's goodness; blessing him severally for each.*—Think it not superfluous, to name things already known to God. He requires this service at your hand. If he sets a value on it, it is not for you surely to refuse it.—Do this, not only in prayer, but on all proper occasions;

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxxxvi. 25.

<sup>2</sup> John iv. 14.

that others also may hear. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."<sup>1</sup> Some, who fear him *not*, may be led to say, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."<sup>2</sup>

2. *Rouse your whole soul, with all its faculties, to the performance of this delightful service.*—It is not your voice alone that must speak. It is not only your sense of duty which must prompt you; not fear alone—nor shame—nor love; but all of these together: that, while "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work;" while "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge;"<sup>3</sup> the Universe within you may join the song, and every faculty which God has bestowed may "bless his holy name."

3. *Specially enjoin yourself never to forget the benefits received.*—'Can this injunction be needful, after the former directions?' It may not seem so; but it is so in practice. Memory, so tenacious of evil and folly, is fearfully treacherous here. Was it not in a moment, that David *forgot* all, in the matter of Uriah?—However willing the spirit may be, the flesh is weak. Therefore—as Moses said to the Israelites—"remember, and forget not."<sup>4</sup>

What must I say to those vacant and insensible souls, who know none of these benefits? or who never feel any thankfulness to God because of them? I will say this—that God keeps a perfect account of every favour he bestows; and therefore let him who has received but "one talent"<sup>5</sup> tremble, if that talent is producing no revenue of praise to the Giver.—The day of reckoning will come;—sooner, probably, than you expect. "But what? even now!"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxvi. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Zech. viii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xix. 1, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Deut. ix. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxv. 24—30.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings xiv. 14.

## SERMON XI.

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REVELATION xxii. 17.—*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come ! And let him that heareth say, Come ! And let him that is athirst come. And, whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

THESE words—nearly the last that were ever spoken from heaven to our guilty world—declare at once their own gracious Author. He who, at the opening of his ministry on earth, proclaimed, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest,”<sup>1</sup> had been revealing to his beloved John, by the lips of an angel, the heavy woes which he intended to bring upon his incorrigible enemies. But he will not suffer this last revelation to be closed, without once more speaking in his own person : and his language is still the same—full of “grace, mercy, and peace.” He reminds you that his old invitation is not yet repealed ; but that others, by his appointment, do still (and must still) re-echo it, even till time shall be no more. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come ! And let him that heareth say, Come ! And let him that is athirst come ! And, whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

Let me then intreat you to listen, as if to the very last sermon you should ever hear, to those reflections which I may be enabled to make, upon two leading topics in the text.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xi. 28.

**I. THE GRACIOUS INVITATION OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.** “Let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

1. *To whom is this Invitation addressed?*—To every one “that is athirst.” An expression this, very frequent in the word of God; and commonly used in a figurative way, to describe a state of craving want, and painful destitution. In the present instance, it represents that strong desire after happiness, which is natural to man, but which he knows not how to gratify. For, though we were created with faculties for knowing, loving, and enjoying God, sin has so debased our nature, that we shun him, and seek our happiness in the things of this world alone. But all its pleasures and pursuits leave our appetites unsatisfied. We thirst—we drink at “broken cisterns,”<sup>1</sup> and thirst still.—Happily, God does not leave all men in utter darkness, as to the cause of their disappointment. He convinces them of sin: he sets their guilt, and his displeasure, before them: he leads them to thirst in a right direction—that is, after him and his love. Are *you* thus longing for better comforts, than any you have hitherto known? “To you then is the word of this salvation sent.”<sup>2</sup>

While, however, many thirst in ignorance, there are those who thirst, but are still reluctant to be satisfied. Observe, therefore, that the invitation is addressed to “whosoever will”—and cannot indeed be accepted by any who are unwilling. Let this consideration awaken the presumptuous; who make themselves sure of heaven, though they have never felt their will consenting to the proposals of the Saviour. Let it still more encourage the lowly and penitent sinner, who looks in vain for any qualifications in himself, that may entitle him to the mercy of Christ. If it be so, that you are unwilling to

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 26.

accept of a full salvation from sin and sorrow, then speak out at once, and refuse it! But this is not the case: you know that you desire it; you know its value; you would part with all you have, be it less or more, to enjoy it. Is it not so? Then surely, you are willing; and the words of Christ himself should convince you, that you are welcome.

2. *What is the blessing offered?*—Exactly that which you need, and desire: “Water”—to cool your fever, to quench your thirst, to refresh and strengthen your soul.

But would you know what it is in plainer language? It is the Pardon of all your sins; all in one moment—all this very moment—if you thirst for that, and be willing to have it. For he who offers it, has laid down his own precious life for sinners—he “bore your sins in his own body on the tree,”<sup>1</sup> that they might never again be imputed to you. The deed is already done, for all his redeemed flock; and the offer of a share therein is here set before every convinced and willing soul.—Again, it is spiritual Life—the life of love, holiness, peace, joy; such a life on earth, as angels lead above; implanted by regeneration—breathing in prayer—growing by daily supplies of his strengthening Spirit—watered by dews from heaven.—Finally, it will be Heaven itself; where flows the “pure river of the water of life;”<sup>2</sup> where, if you ask who the inhabitants are, you will receive for answer, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.... they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more:”<sup>3</sup> for, moreover, these are “they who hungered and thirsted after righteousness,” and now “they are filled.”<sup>4</sup>

3. *On what terms is all this offered?*—‘Here,’ methinks I hear you say, ‘here no doubt is the difficulty:

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter ii. 24. <sup>2</sup> Rev. xxii. 1. <sup>3</sup> Rev. vii. 14—17. <sup>4</sup> Matt. v. 6.

the conditions are in all probability out of my power.<sup>1</sup> Yes, brethren, here is indeed the difficulty ; but it is a difficulty very different from that which you imagine. You expect to be “ bidden to do some great thing.”<sup>1</sup> The difficulty will be, to persuade you to accept the Gospel invitation “ freely”—which are the only terms on which it is offered. Christ has done so much for your salvation, that he will not have any thing added to his work : but here he stands, with pardon, holiness, and glory in his hand ; and he calls on you only to come to him and receive them.—‘ And how is this to be done ? ’ It must be done in Prayer—it must be done by Faith—it must be done simply, humbly, unhesitatingly, thankfully. “ Take then the water of life,” but take it “ freely ; ” as a mere gift—equally open to the poor as to the rich—to the sinner as to the saint ; free for the acceptance, in short, of every one “ that is athirst,” of “ whosoever will.”

Observe now, in the second place,

## II. THE URGENCY WITH WHICH THIS GRACE IS PRESSED UPON YOUR ACCEPTANCE.

All, who know anything of its blessings, are represented as joining in the invitation, or are commanded to carry it to others.

“ *I Jesus . . . the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star* ”<sup>2</sup>—I who purchased this salvation with my own heart’s blood, and therefore well know the value of it—it is I who by my messengers say to you, “ Come and take ” of me “ the water of life freely ! ”—Brethren, make haste to reply, ‘ Lord, if it be thou, I will come unto thee ; only lay hold of my hand as I walk, lest the boisterous waves of guilt and sin shake my faith, and I sink in despair ! ’<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings v. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 16.

<sup>3</sup> See Matt. xiv. 28—30.

Again, "*the Spirit*" also "saith, Come!" come to "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world!"<sup>1</sup> He saith it in the Scriptures, which were given by his inspiration; every page there testifies of Jesus, and invites the thirsting sinner. He saith it in the examples of peace, love, and joy, which may be seen in those whom he has drawn to Christ, and put in actual possession of the living water. He saith it, in his secret voice within thee; which tells thee, O sinner, that there is no comfort or happiness out of Christ; which is urging thee (at this very hour, perhaps) to flee for thy life to "the Friend of Sinners."<sup>2</sup> He has now once more brought to thine ear the blessed news, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself"—for it is he who enables his ministers to "beseech you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled unto God."<sup>3</sup>

Again, the invitation is repeated by "*the Bride, the Lamb's wife*"<sup>4</sup>—that is, by the whole spiritual Church of God, in all ages, and in all climes;—for of all these, Christ is the "husband,"<sup>5</sup> the "beloved," the "friend."<sup>6</sup> They are even now "espoused"<sup>7</sup> unto him; but the marriage itself is delayed, till the whole number of his elect shall be accomplished. Meanwhile, it is their delightful employment, while here, to say "Come!" None like them can tell of the loving-kindness of the Lord: and therefore with one voice they invite you, saying, Come, "taste and see that the Lord is good!"<sup>7</sup>

Once more, "*He that heareth*" these words, whoever he be, is commanded to re-echo them to others. And therefore *I* also "say, Come!" All things are ready for your reception: he who extended his arms on

<sup>1</sup> John i. 29.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. xi. 19.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.    <sup>4</sup> Rev. xxi. 9.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Sol. Song v. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Psalm xxxiv. 8.

the cross in agony, now spreads them towards you in love: and "we have known and believed the love, that he hath to us."<sup>1</sup> Oh that you may know it also! Gladly will you then do your part, and, according to your ability, say to them that are afar off, and to them that are near, "Come!" And thus at length shall the promise be fulfilled—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me!"<sup>2</sup> Amen! Hasten it, O Lord, in thine own time!

But perhaps there are some here present, who are practically resolving that no invitations shall draw them to the Saviour. Let such persons realize the solemn meeting which they must one day have, with those who now desire their conversion: when *Jesus* shall openly declare, "Ye would not come unto me, that ye might have life!"<sup>3</sup> when *the Spirit* shall say, I touched the heart, but it became harder than ever! when *the Bride* shall say, In vain I testified to these unbelievers, that my Lord was "the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely!"<sup>4</sup> And what will you in that day plead on your own behalf? Alas! self-evident guilt will stop your mouth; "the wrath of the Lamb" will overtake you; you "will be silent in darkness."<sup>5</sup> By the terrors of that day, then, I once more charge you, "Come!" Come to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He still waits—perhaps he will not wait much longer—he still waits to be gracious. Let him not wait in vain! Let him have the satisfaction of being able to declare, amidst rejoicing angels, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 16.<sup>2</sup> John xii. 32.<sup>3</sup> John v. 40.<sup>4</sup> *Sol. Song* v. 10. 16.<sup>5</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 9.<sup>6</sup> *Luke* xv. 24.



## SERMON XII.

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**MARK viii. 22—26.**—*And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught. And he looked up, and said, I see men, as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.*

THE works of mercy performed by our Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh, were intended not only as proofs of his power, and evidences of his doctrine; but also as emblems of that work of grace, which he is daily carrying on in the hearts of them that shall be saved. Hence you will often find this work described under terms which allude to bodily healing. For example—“I send thee” (said the Saviour to St. Paul) “*to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.*”<sup>1</sup>—Let us then take the history in our text, as an illustration of the proceedings of the Great Physician, when he comes to heal the blindness of the natural heart, by his converting Spirit. It may serve to remind us, that the work of grace is,

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

## I. UNSEEN IN ITS BEGINNING.

It was our Lord's pleasure that this miracle of healing should be wrought privately. He leads the man out of the town, to have his eyes opened; and when the work is done, even then he will not have it immediately known.

Now the work of regenerating grace is conducted, in its beginnings, with somewhat of the same secrecy. As "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh . . . so is every one that is born of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup> Often, before ministers or friends are aware, Christ has taken a man aside, and has in some mysterious way begun to enlighten his blinded heart. The variety of the methods which he employs, is one means of concealing his operation. *We* are hoping that the obstinate sinner may be converted by terrors and threats; Christ meanwhile draws him by love. *We* hope a faithful sermon may do the work; Christ effects it by some chance-word of a pious friend, some sentence out of a good book. *We* try persuasion, kindness, and reasoning; Christ sends some sharp affliction. "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living."<sup>2</sup> He "will lead the blind by a way that they know not."<sup>3</sup>

From this consideration, faithful Ministers may take encouragement in their work. In praying and labouring for the conversion of sinners, they seem in many cases to labour in vain. But let them not forget, that it is Christ, not they, who must change the heart. And can I certainly know, that nothing yet has been wrought on your souls? No—Christ, I would hope, has spoken to your conscience, when others knew not of it: perhaps he is even now secretly drawing you aside,

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 8.<sup>2</sup> Job xxxiii. 29, 30.<sup>3</sup> Isaiah xlii. 16.

and beginning to open your eyes. God grant it may be so! Let me hope that I shall have you as my "joy and crown of rejoicing,"<sup>1</sup> in the day of our Lord Jesus.—A like encouragement is open to Christian Parents, while striving to bring their families to Christ. He will give success, when you least expect it: he is often actually working, when you are unaware of it. "Cast," therefore, "thy bread upon the waters, and it shall be found after many days." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that; or whether they both shall be alike good."<sup>2</sup>

Again—the work of grace is

## II. GRADUAL IN ITS PROGRESS.

It was an unusual circumstance in this miracle, that the means employed by our Lord seemed at first to succeed but partially. The man could see, but it was so indistinctly, that those who walked near him looked more like trees than men. Now can we suppose it possible, that here was any thing like a failure? Surely not; otherwise the second touching of the eyes of the blind man would not have been likely to do more than the first. In both cases, indeed, the touch was but an outward sign—not the means; the work, first and last, was effected by nothing but Divine Omnipotence. No—here again we have a specimen of his way of proceeding, in the work of spiritual Conversion. Undoubtedly, the Spirit of Christ *could* in a moment subdue the power of sin, and change completely the corrupt heart. But this is not his usual course. He chooses rather to effect the work by degrees—degrees, differing in almost every respect in different individuals. In some penitents, humiliation for sin appears for a while to be the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. xi. 1, 6.

principal change going on. They very slowly get to understand the gracious and encouraging doctrine of Christ. They do indeed look to Christ, as their hope; but they behold him very indistinctly. Like this man, who saw people as if they were trees, they do not discern "the breadth and length, the depth and height, of the love of Christ;"<sup>1</sup> being more intent upon their own miseries, than upon his all-sufficiency. In others, again, knowledge seems to grow faster than grace; while they fancy that they clearly understand the doctrine, they are still very dim-sighted and purblind to their own guilt, pollution, and weakness. They still need "line upon line, precept upon precept,"<sup>2</sup> (to the great mortification of their pride and self-sufficiency) before they know the Gospel as they ought to know it.

It is thus that the great Physician conducts the cure of his spiritual patients. And his design is ever the same: to "stain the pride of all glory;"<sup>3</sup> to work patience—experience—hope;<sup>4</sup> to call forth a more simple dependence, and a more earnest desire. Wait therefore his time, and he will bring it to pass.—Suppose that this man, in his impatience, had departed with his blindness half-cured. How much would he have lost! Perhaps the disease might have returned; and he would have said, that Christ had shewn himself unable to heal. Many, alas! do so now. They get a little comfort—a little knowledge—and they seek no more: nay, that little is soon lost; and then they complain, that there is "no balm in Gilead, no Physician there!"<sup>5</sup> 'I got no good by religion, and so I gave it up.' No! you gave it up, and therefore you got no good by it.—Hear how God complains of such behaviour; "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 18.<sup>2</sup> Isa. xxviii. 10.<sup>3</sup> Isa. xxiii. 9.<sup>4</sup> Romans v. 4.<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah viii. 22.

walked in my ways ! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.”<sup>1</sup> No, brethren, the patient must wait ; happy if, by any means, and after any delay, however long, he may “have the light of life.”<sup>2</sup>

And he will find, that the work is

### III. UNFAILING IN ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT.

Whatever this blind man might think or fear, Christ steadily proceeds to finish the miracle. Gradual as he might chuse to make it, he from the very first intended it to be effectual. A second time, therefore, was that sacred hand laid upon the blind eyes ; and then “he was restored, and saw every man clearly.”

Nor does he undertake to cure the soul, and to enlighten the heart, without the power and the intention to succeed. And he does succeed.—Has he “begun the good work in you ?” he “will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup> Hath he justified you ? he will sanctify you, and that wholly.<sup>4</sup> Are you one of his sheep ? “you shall never perish, nor shall any pluck you out of his hand.”<sup>5</sup> Are you built on the true foundation ? it “standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”<sup>6</sup>

It is true—many seem partially healed, and considerably enlightened, who afterwards fall away. It was so in the Apostles’ days—nay, even under the personal ministry of Christ himself. But see how their case is explained by the Apostle John : “They went out from us, but they were not of us : for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us : but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.”<sup>7</sup> Here was the difference between

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxi. 13—16. <sup>2</sup> John viii. 12. <sup>3</sup> Phil. i. 6. <sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. v. 23.

<sup>5</sup> John x. 27, 28.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 19.

<sup>7</sup> 1 John ii. 19.

Judas Iscariot and Peter. You need not be told why it was, that Peter alone rose from his fall :—" I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."<sup>1</sup> It is not said that Christ prayed for Judas. Where he interposed then, his interposition was effectual : and it is so still. The Lord will not forsake his people, perverse and wayward as they may be. In due time, the blind eyes shall be effectually opened—the dead affections quickened—the old heart renewed—the lost soul saved. He will " do all things well."<sup>2</sup> We shall be " more than conquerors, through him that loved us."<sup>3</sup>

In conclusion, I ask,

1. *Do you feel your own ignorance, blindness, and guilt?* Then you see what you have to do. Come to that Redeemer, who is mighty to save! Prayer will yet reach his ears, and " his hand is stretched out still." Go aside with him—in your closet—in your heart. Be not impatient : " Oh tarry thou the Lord's leisure ; be strong, and he shall comfort thine heart."<sup>4</sup> You shall " not return ashamed ; the poor and needy shall praise his name."<sup>5</sup>

2. *Have you a good hope that Jesus has undertaken your case?* Is the cure proceeding? Has the prayer of faith been effectual, in comforting your guilty mind—removing doubts—giving you power against sin? If so, your duty is the very opposite to that which is enjoined here. You must not conceal the kindness of your heavenly Friend. " When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Let this be your resolution—not in a spirit of ostentation, but of humble, adoring gratitude—

Now will I tell to sinners round  
What a dear Saviour I have found :  
Will point to his atoning blood,  
And say, Behold the way to God !

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Mark vii. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm xxxi. 24. Prayer Book.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm lxxiv. 21.

## SERMON XIII.

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**GALATIANS iii. 22.**—*But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin ; that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

It is observable that, on all subjects connected with religion, St. Paul considers an appeal to Scripture as conclusive. In this respect, every Christian Teacher, and every Christian hearer, ought to resemble the Apostle. “ If we speak not according to this word, there is no light in us :” but if we do, you are bound to receive our doctrine, “ not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God.”

Let us then at this time fix our attention upon

### I. THE SCRIPTURE STATEMENT OF MAN'S NATURAL CONDITION.

And what now do you expect to hear? That man, though fallen and frail, has nevertheless many native virtues and excellences? that, if his conduct *be* sometimes amiss, yet his heart is good? that he needs only to resolve, and he may be every thing that God requires? in short, that (with the exception of a few very atrocious sinners) men in general have no cause to be apprehensive respecting a future Judgment? These are, I know, the vain imaginations which multitudes indulge :—but they receive no countenance from Holy Scripture. They who speak thus, are the very persons there described as crying, “ Peace, peace, when there

is no peace"<sup>1</sup>—as “making lies their refuge”<sup>2</sup>—as “belieing the Lord”<sup>3</sup> himself. No—if God’s word is to decide, you will find that

1. *The Scripture brings against man a charge of sin.* As preparatory to this, the Bible fully sets forth man’s duty: sometimes dwelling on the several particulars of the ten commandments; at other times, comprehensively demanding “Love” as “the fulfilling”<sup>4</sup> of the whole law; expanding this, again, into the two branches of that love—love to God, love to man; or pointing to still more special duties, arising out of special relations and situations in life. Furthermore, we are told, that “whoso offendeth in one point is guilty of all”<sup>5</sup>—he has broken through that hedge of the law, which should have kept him from all sin.—After laying down a strict principle like this, it ceases to be surprising, that the Scripture invariably addresses man as a sinner. For man’s own conscience must tell him, that God’s perfect law has not been kept.

2. *On this charge the Scripture shuts man up* (for that is the meaning of the words “hath concluded”—) *as already sentenced and condemned.*—Man is not merely in danger of this sentence; it is passed on him already. Living in this world, he is but a prisoner at large. God’s justice has got firm hold of him; and wander where he may, and vaunt as he likes, the day of execution is coming nearer and nearer—and he cannot escape. Did you ever know of any one escaping from the grasp of death? well—that is the first stroke of the executioner; and it hath “passed on all men, because all have sinned.”<sup>6</sup>—For,

3. *All men, without a single exception, come under this charge.*—All nations; Jews, with all their privi-

<sup>1</sup> Jer. vi. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xxviii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. v. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. xiii. 10.

<sup>5</sup> James ii. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. v. 12.



leges—Gentiles, with all their learning and wisdom ; all, whether civilized or barbarous, ancient or modern. All ranks ; whether rich, noble, or poor ; clergy or laity, masters or servants,—all are shut up in the same prison. All ages ; the infant just born, in his hereditary corruption—the hoary head, just bending to the grave with the sins of a long life—and all intermediate ages. They may differ in the kind or degree of their guilt, but all are equally under sentence, as sinners against God.

4. *The charge is incessantly reiterated, and pressed again and again.*—You will find it, not in one or two pointed texts, the meaning of which might perhaps be mistaken ; no—the whole mass of Scripture speaks one and the same language. So universally is this the case, that the Apostle here quotes no particular part, but refers to the whole—“ THE SCRIPTURE hath concluded all under sin : ” as though he would say, ‘ You need not look far—open the book, and judge for yourself.’ And if this might be truly spoken, with regard to that portion of the Scripture which alone existed at that time, (namely, the Old Testament) how much more so, since the addition of the New ! This very text is itself “ *Scripture* ”—written “ by inspiration of God ”<sup>1</sup>—deciding by its own authority, even while appealing to the former revelation, that man is a guilty and condemned transgressor ! On this subject, in short, the Scripture statements are so numerous, as to make the whole Bible appear like the roll given to the prophet Ezekiel ; which “ was written within and without, and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.”<sup>2</sup>

‘ And all this is true enough,’ some one may reply ; ‘ but surely there needed not this continual repetition

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel ii. 10.

of so plain a doctrine. If we be sinners, and actually sentenced, is it not a cruel course, to keep reminding us of our woe?—It would indeed, were there no valuable end to be answered by such a course. But that is not the case; as you may see, on considering, secondly,

## II. THE DESIGN WITH WHICH THIS STATEMENT IS SO EARNESTLY INSISTED UPON.

Why do the Scriptures thus shut up all men under the charge of sin? St. Paul replies—“that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ may be given to them that believe.” The object aimed at, in the Scripture doctrine of man’s sin, was

1. *To shew the reasonableness of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone.*

Though man be guilty, condemned, and under actual sentence; yet his condition, so long as life endures, is not hopeless. There is in the same Scripture a *promise*—a promise of salvation. The procurer of that promise is *Jesus Christ*—he died on the cross to obtain it. And the one simple way of becoming interested in this promise is very distinctly declared to us—it is *by faith of Jesus Christ*—faith, resting on his merits and atonement—faith, given by his Holy Spirit to all who ask it. Now we often find, that men hesitate and stumble at this way of salvation. It is mortifying to their pride, that they should be so completely indebted to the merits of another, for a title to heaven—and to the grace of another, for even the power of accepting that title. ‘And why,’ say they, ‘should we—rational, intelligent, independent beings—be thus disgraced and bowed down to the ground, as abject, worthless, helpless creatures?’ For the very best of all reasons, saith *the Scripture*; because you are abject, guilty, helpless

creatures, and therefore require to be humbled. Here in fact is the very purpose, with which the doctrine of our sinfulness is so insisted on in the bible. Humility is the only foundation on which the Gospel can stand. If man has any merit left, or any fragment of spiritual strength remaining, he may save himself: but why then did the Son of God hang upon the accursed tree? No—if men will not see their ruin, they will never seek their remedy. Therefore will we never cease to press upon you this Scripture truth, that you are utterly ruined; so ruined by sin, that nothing but the free, superabounding grace of Jesus Christ, received by faith, can save you from destruction.

It is not enough, however, that your understanding should be persuaded of this truth; your conduct also needs to be influenced by it. This, therefore, was a second object aimed at, in the Scripture doctrine of man's sin—

2. *To compel sinners actually to accept the promise, by believing in Christ.*

The design is that the promised salvation “may be given.” The thought was not to be endured, that this promise should come to nought. Think of the dishonour that must accrue to the Redeemer, if his redemption should prove ineffectual—all mankind agreeing to reject it! He himself is prophetically described, as mourning over the possibility of such a disappointment: “Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought.”<sup>1</sup> In steadfast faith, however, he leaves his judgment with the Lord, and his work with his God; and is assured of a most glorious result. One method, by which the Lord secures a successful result, is that which is now before us. Throughout the Scripture, he preaches to

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xlix. 4.

sinners “the terrors of the Lord;”<sup>1</sup> in order to awaken, convince, alarm them—to cast them prostrate in self-despair—to bring them into that state of mind, in which alone “the promise” can “be given” to them. And in this way that prophecy is fulfilled—“They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them.”<sup>2</sup> The terrors of God thus prove mercies—they are the wholesome rod, by which the lost sheep are driven back to that gracious fold, where they may remain safe, under the care of the good shepherd, Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, I ask,

ARE YOU NOT SINNERS? Methinks there should be no doubt on this head. Yet while they own the fact, many continue to feel satisfied with themselves. Is not this too much the case with *you*? Oh how can you be at peace one moment, while under arrest as a transgressor against the Almighty?—But perhaps you profess to rely on his mercy: then I ask again.

IS SALVATION YET GIVEN TO YOU? In other words, Have you believed in Jesus Christ?—No trifling question this—nor to be carelessly answered. Some evidence you *must* have, one way or the other. When did you begin to repent? When, to cast your soul on Christ? When, to enter on his willing service?—If none of these,

WHAT WILL YE DO IN THE END—that end which is shortly approaching—death—Judgment? Oh, ’tis an easy thing now to mock at Christian truths, Christian friends, Christian duties: but it is like criminals jesting in their fetters, sneering on the gallows!—Tremble, then, and repent! Pray, believe, and be saved!

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians v. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah xxxi. 9.

## SERMON XIV.

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JOHN xiii. 21.—*When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*

WE may consider these words in three points of view : first,

I. AS PREDICTING THE SIN OF JUDAS. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.” A prediction like this shews,

1. *That Christ suffered as no other human being ever suffered.* Great as are the trials and sorrows of Man, they are generally unforeseen ; and by this circumstance more than half their weight is removed. For as the apprehension of evil is often found to be more distressing than the actual endurance of it, what would that apprehension be, if it were always accompanied by undoubted certainty ? It was so in the case of Jesus. We are supported by hope, even on the brink of misery : Jesus foresaw all his woes, and he knew them to be unavoidable. Such was his anguish, endured for us !—This prediction shews, further,

2. *That all hearts are open to the Son of God.* It was not many days—perhaps not many hours—since Judas had made his agreement with the chief priests. He was sure not to have betrayed himself ; and the same secrecy was equally needful to his accomplices. Yet how vain all their precautions ! The traitor hears

his own purpose first exposed, by the very Being whom he would betray! How then can *you* hope to impose on Christ, and shun the eye of God? "They that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night:"<sup>1</sup> but there is "no darkness or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves."<sup>2</sup> "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? saith the Lord. Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."<sup>3</sup>—We learn, moreover,

3. *That the most wicked actions of men unintentionally promote God's secret purposes of grace to mankind.* He who foretold this crime, could have prevented its commission, or counteracted its success. But the act, though springing from the voluntary sin of Judas, was a part of God's plan for man's salvation; foreseen—permitted—over-ruled for good. Shall we murmur, then, even at the most mysterious dispensation, when He has promised that "all things shall work together for good to them that love him, to them that are called according to his purpose?"<sup>4</sup>

These, then, are some of the reflections suggested by the text, if regarded simply as a prophecy. But it is to be viewed, secondly,

II. AS DESCRIBING THE AGGRAVATIONS OF THAT SIN. In this view, every word had a sting for the conscience of Judas, had not that conscience been hardened.

1. *It was a sin of Treachery*, which Christ foretold; a sin of that kind, which is held in abhorrence even by fallen man. To profess love, where injury is intended—to appear on the side of Christ, but to be really for

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. v. 7.    <sup>2</sup> Job xxxiv. 22.    <sup>3</sup> Jer. xxiii. 24.    <sup>4</sup> Rom. viii. 28.

his enemies—to cry, Hail Master ! in hope of escaping detection, while others do the wrong—to kiss, and by that very action to betray ;—human nature itself shudders at the baseness. Nor is the case at all mended, by urging that Judas was moved by self-interest, and not by malice. The plea only adds detestable meanness to his character, where passion and revenge might have furnished (what men would call) a prouder excuse. No—every one will condemn the traitor !—And who is the traitor ? has he no name but Judas ? Alas ! his “ name is Legion, for he is many.”<sup>1</sup> All, who uphold the “ form of godliness ” and “ deny its power ; ”<sup>2</sup> all, who consider habitual worldliness and sin to be not in the least inconsistent with their professing and calling themselves Christians—all, who bring to the Lord’s table an unhumbled, sensual, hardened heart ; all these, say what they will, are acting over again the part of Judas—betraying the cause of Christ to the contempt and scorn of his more open enemies.

2. *It was treachery against the best of Friends* : “ One of you shall betray ME ! ” “ The love of Christ,” by the testimony of one who seems to have had deeper views of it than any, “ passeth knowledge.”<sup>3</sup> Surely, then, even those who enjoyed the least acquaintance with Christ, must have had abundant opportunities of observing that love. And this was unquestionably the case with Judas. He had seen miracles of healing—had heard discourses of love—had seen God Incarnate ! The very dead had been raised to life in his presence, by this heavenly Friend of man ; and then he goes and betrays him for thirty pieces of silver ! Nay more—Judas had accepted a commission from his Friend, to teach and to preach in his name ; and he abuses the privilege, the more readily to betray ! Which shall

<sup>1</sup> Mark v. 9.<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 5<sup>3</sup> Eph. iii. 19.

we more admire—the folly or the baseness of such conduct? But is not the same Christ *our* friend too? Yes, he is! He had moreover our good in view, in all that he did on earth, as much or more than that of Judas. Yet multitudes still prefer the silver to Christ. Rather than lose “the pleasures of sin for a season,”<sup>1</sup> they will forfeit their soul, their conscience, their peace, their best friend, their Saviour, their God, their All. Plead guilty, thou impenitent sinner! Oh, begin to tremble at the thought, that thou art betraying him whom good men love, whom angels adore, and whom the Father himself delighteth to honour.

3. *It was the treachery of a highly privileged and confidential Servant.* “One of you!” No, you cannot credit me. I must therefore speak more deliberately and solemnly—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me!”—For three years had the Pharisees been seeking for such an accomplice: but the multitude *would* not—they saw that Jesus was indeed the Christ; the officers *could* not—for they were overawed, convinced, alarmed. These persecutors never dreamed of asking one of the Apostles—who would? when, to their great astonishment, he offers of his own accord! The devil puts it into his heart, and he welcomes the idea.—‘One of you! you are pale at the thought of my approaching death—“one of you” is the traitor! All friends!—and yet “one will betray me.” Nay, you have all been joining in a fresh act of spiritual and mutual love, feeding by anticipation upon my body and blood—which blood nevertheless will not be shed, till one of you shall have betrayed me.’ Who can wonder at the consternation of the eleven? Who can palliate such aggravated guilt? Yet how often is it repeated, when

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews xi. 25.



those who profess to have “tasted the heavenly gift, and to have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost,” fall back into sin; and thus betray and “crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame!”<sup>1</sup> Oh, “take heed, Christian brethren, lest there be in any of you such an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”<sup>2</sup> And when you come to the Holy Communion, let it be with the full purpose of doing, what you will there profess to do—presenting yourselves ‘as a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice,’ to him who hath redeemed you.

Let us read this Scripture, lastly,

**III. AS EXEMPLIFYING THE FEELINGS OF A HOLY MIND, IN THE CONTEMPLATION OF SIN.** Jesus “was troubled in spirit.”

Not because mortified by an unexpected discovery. He had known that these things would take place, at least as long ago as when David, in his name, and by the inspiration of his Spirit, penned the fifty-fifth Psalm (verses 12–14). Nor because this treachery made his own fate certain: it could not be more so, than his eternal purpose had already made it. No; he was troubled,

1. *At the present dishonour done to God and the Gospel.* It was a triumph to Satan, who thus “bruised his heel.”<sup>3</sup> It was a triumph to all the ungodly—“Ah, so would we have it!”<sup>4</sup> All this grieves a holy mind. It is not passion—it is not jealousy—which calls forth from true Christians the reproof of sin. It is trouble of heart, because God is dishonoured. Encourage this feeling, my Christian brethren, let the world despise you for it as they may. Be it your consolation to know, that you are conformed herein

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vi. 6.    <sup>2</sup> Heb. iii. 12.    <sup>3</sup> Gen. iii. 15.    <sup>4</sup> Psa. xxxv. 25.

to your pure and blessed Master.—He was troubled, moreover,

2. *At the approaching Ruin of a sinner.* He saw before him a soul, which (before even his own death should be accomplished) would be “gone to its place”<sup>1</sup>—to hell—to just and everlasting damnation. Could he, who came from heaven to earth to save sinners from damnation, fail to be troubled at such a sight?—He still feels the same trouble for thee, O Sinner! whosoever thou art. I must not say, indeed, that he foresees thy damnation, as he did that of Judas—neither can I say that he does not. Nevertheless, it is with grief and sorrow that he beholds thee continuing in sin, and shewing thyself the willing slave of Satan. His holy children also feel the same cause for mourning—none but devils and sinners rejoice. Oh turn, then, and repent; and there shall be joy in heaven!

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 25.

## SERMON XV.

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PSALM cxix. 25.—*My soul cleaveth unto the dust :  
quicken thou me, according to thy word.*

It is an important thing, my brethren, to know ourselves. For, whether we possess this knowledge or not, “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”<sup>1</sup> Now who can realize the thought, that he is thus overlooked in his closest privacy,—and that too, by the Being with whom it most concerns us to be on good terms,—without turning his own eye inward, to see whether all be right? whether his heart be fit for God’s inspection? Alas! we have reason enough to dread that inspection: for if so spiritual a person as David was under the necessity of making complaints like that in the text, what may we not suppose the state of our own souls to be, even before we examine them? Yet let us not therefore shun self-knowledge; but rather, like him, bring our worst evils to God, in humble confession and believing prayer, that we may be healed.

Consider, then, this pattern which David sets before you; and may the Spirit of the Lord instruct you thereby!—His words contain,

I. A GRIEVOUS COMPLAINT: “My soul cleaveth unto the dust.”

1. *The condition of his Soul*, you observe, is David’s

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews iv. 13.

grand concern. There were times, indeed, when he could complain of bodily suffering, of worldly trouble, of malicious enemies, of man's ingratitude. And in all this, you find no difficulty in imitating him; on subjects of this kind you can complain as loudly as he. But do you ever think of your soul? Careful and troubled as you are about many things, is not this one thing almost universally and constantly neglected?<sup>1</sup> As if the soul *could* not be in danger! *could* not suffer! *could* not be diseased! *could* not by any mischance perish everlastingly! Is then the soul of every man so safe, as to justify this habitual neglect? If not, Oh what madness, to be attending to any thing at all, however important, while you forget your soul!

2. David's complaint teaches us indirectly, *what is the true healthy condition of the soul*. It ought to be continually mounting upward, towards heaven and heavenly things. The only rest for the soul is in God. Earthly things cannot fill or feed it—the attempt is like “feeding on ashes.”<sup>2</sup> It must have peace with God; and, for this end, must have an interest in Christ; and in order to this, must seek and enjoy communion with the Holy Spirit. If it gain this in some small measure now, yet the full harvest of the blessing is hereafter, and above. The soul's “treasure” then being “in heaven,”<sup>3</sup> thither should its hearty desires be always ascending. Is not this reasonable? Whatever attention may be required to the needful, but short-lived, concerns of our present state, ought not the soul to be ever stretching forth its eager desires, and its warmest affections, towards those things which are eternal? Can it otherwise be in health or safety? But

3. *The soul's actual condition is far otherwise*. “My soul,” saith David, “cleaveth unto the dust.”—In the

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xlv. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xix. 21.

ungodly and unconverted, this is habitually the case. Many of you have not even an idea of fixing your heart on things above; you know not what it means; and when religious people speak of it, or the Minister of Christ requires it in his name, you are ready to think them fools—and perhaps are pleased to call them hypocrites. This is a plain confession on your own part, that your soul tends only downward. But the holy Christian, too, makes the same confession, yet with very different feelings. With him, it is a matter for grievous complaint. For he has known the blessedness of looking upwards. He knows what ought to be the spirituality of his mind; and that he cannot be happy without it. Yet, when he reviews each day his inward history—‘Where have been my desires, my thoughts, and enjoyments?’—alas, ‘Down in the dust’ is too often his sad reply. It did not perhaps strike him, while he was engaged in his necessary employments, that this was the case; but the cool of the day brings with it recollection, shame, and self-reproach. He sometimes can scarce call to mind one spiritual feeling; but he remembers an abundance of “What must I eat, what must I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?”<sup>1</sup> He recollects also many evil tempers, much self-indulgence and sloth, and worldly complacency, and desire of human praise, and self-admiration, and self-will. Alas, it seems to him as though he had as yet learned in the school of Christ nothing to any purpose. His chief encouragement is, that he “abhors himself”<sup>2</sup> for all that he finds within him.

4. *The impossibility of effecting a change*, is the finishing stroke in this grievous complaint of the true Christian. “My soul cleaveth —.” It is not like the lark, that occasionally descends for a moment, for

<sup>1</sup> Matthew vi. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Job xlii. 6.

its necessary food, and then mounts up again, readily and habitually, to heaven's gate. It is rather like the unclean reptiles, which crawl on the ground, and cannot, if they would, rise above it. 'I strive' (says the faithful Christian) 'to wean or tear away my affections from the world; I feel myself guilty for not doing it; I make new resolutions again and again; but my soul cleaves to the dust so closely, so fast, that I cannot loosen it. Oh wretched man that I am! My body, I know, is dust, and must return to dust:<sup>1</sup> but is not my soul spiritual, immortal, and heaven-born? must this also sink and grovel?—Dust was to be the serpent's meat<sup>2</sup>—shall it evermore be mine likewise? Alas, alas! I cannot do the things that I would. "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"'<sup>3</sup>

Thus far you have seen the Christian's weakness. Now behold his strength. His grievous complaint is followed immediately by

II. A FAITHFUL PRAYER. O Lord, "quicken thou me, according to thy word."

1. *The grand Remedy which he desires* is spiritual Life. All this cleaving to the dust is a token, more or less, of death in the soul. In ungodly worldlings, the soul is altogether "dead in trespasses and sins:"<sup>4</sup> "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."<sup>5</sup> But the real child of God has undergone a new birth. Regeneration by the Spirit of Christ has given him a new nature, with new tastes, feelings, and desires. This change, however, though universal, is far from complete. "The old man" of sin dies but slowly; "the

<sup>1</sup> Genesis iii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah lxxv. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Romans vii. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians ii. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Romans viii. 7.

new man”<sup>1</sup> grows also but slowly : hence the believer is sometimes ready to doubt, whether he be alive unto God or not—and then he prays, “ Quicken thou me ! ” But even when assured that the saving change is begun, he earnestly desires “ growth in grace,”<sup>2</sup> as the only remedy for his inward distress. He knows that there is no such thing as standing still ; if not becoming more alive, he is becoming more dead—if not nearer heaven, he is closer to the dust. His wish therefore is, not merely that he may “ have life,” but that he may “ have it more abundantly.”<sup>3</sup> Is this *your* unceasing object of desire ?

2. *The Source to which he looks for this remedy is God*—“ quicken *Thou* me ! ”—Natural life, you know, is wholly independent of our own doings—“ it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.”<sup>4</sup> And David knew, as doth every enlightened Christian, that spiritual life must needs come from the same quarter. Happy is he who, having this knowledge, acts upon it ; and, instead of wearing out his spirits in vain endeavours to change his own nature, comes to God in Christ daily, for the performance of this peculiarly Divine work. Strivings in your own strength must be in vain ; “ but with God all things are possible.”<sup>5</sup> In order to secure his aid, you must both believe in its efficacy, and daily put yourself under his care, “ by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.”<sup>6</sup> Thus he will have the sole glory, and you will obtain the benefit.

3. *To what Extent does David desire the application of this remedy ?* Why, to the full extent of what the holy law requires : “ quicken me according to thy word.” Many confine their complaints to a single evil propensity ; and feel as though they would be satisfied

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 22, 24.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter iii. 18.

<sup>3</sup> John x. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm c. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xix. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. vi. 18.

with some considerable, though incomplete, victory. Or they wish it to be given them hereafter—not yet. Or they would have it granted gently; without much pain, or labour, or mortification. But the believer, when in his right mind, says, “According to thy word!” “Holy, as thou art holy!”<sup>1</sup> Instant death if possible, to sin; and that, in God’s own way, however trying or humiliating!’

But this clause of the text may be taken in another sense, as shewing,

4. *The Plea which he urges in support of his petition*  
I ask only that which thy word has promised: “remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.”<sup>2</sup> Here, Christian brethren is the grand secret of successful prayer. Let it be “the prayer of faith,”<sup>3</sup> and it shall heal you. David looked forward—you must look backward—to Christ and to the everlasting covenant in his blood. In that fountain wash away all your guilt; on that gracious covenant repose all your hope. Seek to be justified—not by this imperfect, wavering obedience, which causes so much distress in the recollection of it—but by the “righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup> Then, “being justified by his blood,” you “shall be saved by his life.”<sup>5</sup> His Spirit shall quicken, purify, and elevate your soul. You “shall renew your strength: you shall mount up with wings as eagles; you shall run and not be weary, you shall walk and not faint.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter i. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. iii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxix. 49.

<sup>5</sup> Romans iii. 22.

<sup>3</sup> James v. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah xl. 31.



## SERMON XVI.

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MATTHEW xix. 17.—*But, if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

THERE are two classes of persons, by whom this Scripture may be greatly misapprehended. First; those who “go about to establish their own righteousness, and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God,”<sup>1</sup> will be sure to exclaim, ‘What can be clearer than this declaration of Jesus Christ? Works, not faith, must save our souls!’—On the other hand, the broken-hearted sinner, who knows that he has already transgressed the commandments, in will, word, and deed, will say, ‘If such be the conditions of entering into life, no hope remains for me. My opportunity is past and gone. I must wear out my guilty pilgrimage as well as I may, till my change come, and then lie down in sorrow for ever and ever.’—For the benefit of both these classes, for their “correction and instruction in righteousness,”<sup>2</sup> let us (in dependance on God’s blessing),

### I. ENQUIRE INTO THE DESIGN WITH WHICH OUR SAVIOUR SPOKE THESE WORDS.

His design, it is obvious, must be ascertained from the circumstances under which they were spoken. A young ruler—a man of large property—came running, and, kneeling down to Jesus, enquired, “Good Master,

<sup>1</sup> Romans x. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Timothy iii. 16.

what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Our Lord first notices his address—"Good Master." "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one; that is God." Then, waiting for no reply, he proceeds—"If however thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." This, you say, sounds very plain: yet the Ruler did not think it plain enough—for he immediately asks, "Which?" Jesus, in reply, refers him to the Moral law; specifying two or three particular Commandments. Hereupon the young ruler manifests a little disappointment. "All these have I kept from my youth up! what lack I yet?" Why, nothing at all, if our Lord's words had meant what they literally expressed. Nevertheless, Jesus says that there is one thing still lacking. And what is it? You will perhaps be surprised to hear; "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." You will feel less surprise at the result—the young man "went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

Now if we must needs take the literal meaning of the text, we ought to do the same with every part of the story. For example: Christ finds fault, you might say, with this man for calling him *Good*; therefore he was *not* good. He says that this is a title suited for God alone; therefore, of course, he means to imply, that he himself is *not* God. Again—he does not contradict the young man's account of himself; therefore we must believe that he "*had* kept all these things from his youth up"—in direct opposition to the former assertion, "None is good, but God." Once more; the poor might infer, that the plain design of the narrative is, that rich people should "sell all," for *their* benefit; otherwise they cannot "enter into life." *Nay, on comparing St. Matthew's account with that*

of St. Mark, we might conclude that Jesus was really pleased with this young man : for St. Mark relates, " Jesus, looking on him, loved him." <sup>1</sup>

You see what absurdities must arise, if we follow the literal sense, without enquiring into the whole Design. In a word, then—our Lord's aim was to expose *ignorance, self-righteousness, and insincerity*, in one whom the spectators were doubtless admiring for his apparent devotion.

1. *The man was ignorant of Christ's real character.* A prophet ! yes—but nothing more : a " good Master"—but still only a human master : the head of a new sect or party. Now it was in order to excite thoughts of his Divine character, that Jesus referred him to God, as alone good. On other occasions, he had challenged all his opponents to convict him of a single sin ; <sup>2</sup> but they could not—neither could this young man. His views were therefore too low. The man whom he addressed was verily more than man—he was " God over all, blessed for ever." <sup>3</sup> Alas, how continually do men still underrate his glory ! What, know ye not that he is the Searcher of all hearts ? that he hath all power in heaven and earth, to save or to destroy ? that he will in a very little while come to be your Judge ? You say that you believe all this : where, in your life and conduct, is the proof of it ?

2. *He expected Life as the reward of his own merit.* " What good thing shall I do ? " It is the question of the self-righteous in every age. Heaven must be paid to them as a debt, not granted freely as an undeserved gift ; else they will not accept of it. ' Well,' saith our Lord ; ' if it is on this ground that you will enter into life, here are the conditions—" Keep the commandments ! " Perform, not some one " good

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 21.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Romans ix. 5.

thing," but all: not in the mere letter, but in the spirit—after the comprehensive 'law of Love.' And, the more readily to open his self-righteous eyes, he dwells on the duty of love, as it regards our neighbour only—passing over the love of God, as above the man's comprehension. The design, therefore, was the very reverse of what it seemed to be. Christ's object was to prepare his hearer for that doctrine—"By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."<sup>1</sup> He claims the whole debt, in order to shew the man his utter bankruptcy.

3. *He was not sincerely willing to sacrifice anything for the kingdom of heaven's sake.*—'He would do any good thing: Oh yes! all the ten commandments—and more too, if necessary!' This surely was a promising disciple! Yet see how one word discomposes him! The only sacrifice which our Lord required, was one which a sincere profession of Christianity in those days rendered inevitable:—in following Christ, poverty, danger, mortifications, nay death itself, must needs be encountered by every true disciple. One only of these consequences is pointed out by our Saviour—the loss of property; and he proposes that the young ruler should submit to it in the form of a voluntary surrender to the poor, rather than as the effect of persecution. But at once the insincerity of his heart was detected. He could give to Christ any thing, but what he loved. He loved these great possessions, above eternal life. And thus Jesus, by his wise address, brought him to the turning point. Alas! like multitudes now, he turned the wrong way. "He was sorrowful" indeed—but he was resolved: nor do we know that he ever afterwards altered his choice. So do many among us perish, through one besetting sin: hearing, admiring,

<sup>1</sup> Romans iii. 20.

praising,—nay, promoting, the Gospel; but still holding fast the one beloved idol. Are *you* acting in this heartless manner, and “deceiving your own souls?”

Having thus shewn with what design our Saviour uttered these words, I would now,

## II. ENDEAVOUR TO PROMOTE A SIMILAR DESIGN, BY A FAITHFUL APPLICATION OF THEM TO OURSELVES.

And here let us more strictly confine our<sup>1</sup> attention to the words in the text. Harken then to the Saviour, when he says, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”

These words, duly considered, may

1. *Convince us of sin.* There is no doubt, that we OUGHT to keep the commandments. Whose commandments are they? those of a holy God—our rightful Lord. They are, moreover, “holy, just, good,” reasonable. He can ask no less—we ought to render no less—than perfect obedience. Have you done so? It is almost trifling with you, to ask it. But ask yourselves! Catechize your consciences! Retrace the outward act, and the secret thought. Place fully before you this truth-telling glass of the Law. If you be honest, the Psalmist’s words will scarcely suffice to express the result. “Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me.”<sup>1</sup> Job’s confession will now have a meaning: “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!”<sup>2</sup>

These words, again, if duly weighed, may

2. *Drive us to Christ as a Refuge.* Keep the Commandments!—‘Which?’—All! all! cursed is

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xl. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Job xlii. 6.

he that continueth not in them all ! Who can do this ? Try the experiment for a month—week—day. What success have you ? ‘ Alas, my sin is ever before me <sup>1</sup>—iniquities prevail against me ! <sup>2</sup> No life, therefore, for me ! The curse is upon me, and I perish ! ’—Nay, my fellow sinner, why perish, when there is a way of free grace still open, for even the vilest to be saved ? God “justifieth the ungodly,” <sup>3</sup> who seek for life through Christ alone and his blood. This is that “righteousness of God without the Law, which was witnessed by the Law and the prophets ;” <sup>4</sup> namely, that “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” <sup>5</sup> Believe this, thou trembling sinner ! The law never can save thee : but let it be thy “schoolmaster to lead thee to Christ,” <sup>6</sup> and then thou shalt be saved indeed—justified by faith, and freely admitted to the family of God.

Once more—these words, duly understood, may

3. *Guide the steps of the justified believer.* The curse of the law is at an end—not its obligation. Can it ever cease to be our duty, to “love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves ?” Never ! Here then is the right use of the commandments. They are to be the guide of our present life not the means of obtaining eternal life. They still must humble us by shewing our duty, and shew us our duty by humbling us : and none will obey them better than he who resolves to “glory in nothing but the cross of Christ Jesus his Lord.” Begin therefore where the Bible begins ; and “go on unto perfection”—a perfection unceasingly sought by prayer and labour on earth, but found only in heaven.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm li. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. iii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm lxxv. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. x. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. iv. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. iii. 24.

## SERMON XVII.

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PSALM lxxvi. 10.—*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee ; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*

THERE are many mysteries, both in the word of God, and in his Providence, which will never be cleared up to us, till we get to heaven. Some light, however, is occasionally thrown upon them, by express declarations of Holy Scripture. Of this kind is the statement in my text ; in which you are told one of the reasons why Almighty God permits so much evil still to exist in the world.

Let me, then, set before you,

I. THE DOCTRINE HERE ASSERTED. “The wrath of man shall praise God ; the remainder of wrath shall He restrain.”

This doctrine, you observe, has two distinct branches. David expresses his confidence,

1. *That the evil passions of men shall eventually promote the glory of God.*—“The wrath of man,” here spoken of, means that natural enmity which is felt in the heart, and expressed in the conduct of mankind, against God and his interests. It is shewn in ways innumerable. Sinful man sets at nought the *authority* of God, by deliberately breaking his commands ; despises his *people*, because of their resemblance to him ; cavils at his *revealed word*, and measures it by his own puny

understanding; nay, has even attempted to defeat his *purposes*, by opposition of various kinds. Do you ask for instances? Look at Cain—slaying his own brother Abel! and wherefore? because God had testified his approbation of Abel's gifts.<sup>1</sup> The quarrel was not so much with his brother, as with God.—Read the long conflict of Pharaoh with God's people. Hear, first, his own design—"I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go:" then observe what was the Lord's own view of the contest—"How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?"<sup>2</sup>—Come down to later times. Behold king Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and the people of the Jews, all assembling together against the Lord, and against his Christ.—Call to mind the many Antichrists which were afterwards permitted to arise—Mahometans, Papists, Heretics;—not to mention the ordinary enmity, which is found in every unconverted heart against spiritual religion. In these things you behold "the wrath of man"—his opposition to God. The practical language of all this is, "Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast away his cords from us."<sup>3</sup>

Does any one stand aghast at the tendency of all this? Well he may, at the guilt and sin of it; but my text forbids all apprehension for the result. "The wrath of man," says the prophet, "shall surely praise thee." Without even interrupting God's designs, it shall promote them. Look again at the instances alluded to: but chiefly fix your attention on the apparent success of the enemies of Jesus. And did not their "wrath praise God?" Was it not the unconscious means of offering up the long promised Sacrifice—the Lamb provided of God?<sup>4</sup> The Apostles themselves took

<sup>1</sup> Genesis iv. 4—8.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus v. 2; x. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm ii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Compare Genesis xxii. 8, and John i. 29.



this view of it afterwards : “ for of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus . . . both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”<sup>1</sup> And in like manner every kind of opposition to God, direct or indirect, shall assuredly be turned round from its own purpose, so as to accomplish his wise and holy designs.—We are taught, further,

2. *That all human wickedness, not available for this end, shall be irresistibly controlled:* “ The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

There are in man’s evil heart “ many devices ”<sup>2</sup>—there are “ floods of ungodly men ”<sup>3</sup>—“ a world of iniquity.”<sup>4</sup> God has no occasion for the whole ; after giving his own direction, therefore, to a part of it, so as to shew his wisdom, he then, to shew his power, crushes and puts down “ the remainder.” Why did he so long tolerate Pharaoh ? The Lord himself replies, in those remarkable words which St. Paul quotes from Exodus ix. 16—“ In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power ; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.” This done, Pharaoh is set aside : he was for going on with the contest ; but the Lord had accomplished his purpose—and the rest is restrained. So again—how came it to pass, that the Jews succeeded in “ killing the Prince of life,”<sup>5</sup> and yet could not keep him in his grave ? There was the same “ wrath ; ” yes ! but the former was to “ praise ” God—the latter would have gone beyond his design ; it was a “ remainder ”—and therefore “ restrained.”

In the cases already mentioned, this restraint was

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 27, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs xix. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xviii. 4.

<sup>4</sup> James iii. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Acts iii. 15.

effected by the power of God's vengeance. Sometimes he takes a more gracious, though equally effectual course. He converts the enmity into love, by a spiritual influence upon the sinner's heart. Thus it was, in the case of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the Christians. All that "exceeding madness against them"<sup>1</sup> was overruled, for a season, as a means of dispersing the Christian teachers, and their doctrine with them, into other lands; this object being gained, the Lord in mercy restrains the remainder of the tiger's wrath. "Saul" becomes "Paul;" and the churches of Judæa hear with wonder, "that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed: and they glorified God IN HIM."<sup>2</sup>

Let me now point out,

II. A FEW OF THE PRACTICAL LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS DOCTRINE.—Let it lead you to

1. *Adore God's unfathomable Wisdom!*

Is not that wisdom indeed wonderful, and far above our feeble comprehension? Worldly policy thinks that it has done admirably, when it has secured the co-operation of *willing* helpers; if, with such aid, it can defeat the designs of its opposers, it has done its utmost. But here is a Being, who uses his enemies' hands for his own work, and they know it not! *We* are satisfied if we can proceed on level ground and employ ordinary means. But God's "way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known."<sup>3</sup> This world, in short, is a scene for the display of his wisdom, such as even the heaven of heavens does not furnish. There he has no enemies: all is direct, willing obedience: and yet he equally fulfils all his will, whether it be "in the army of

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvi. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Galatians i. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm lxxvii. 19.

heaven, or among the inhabitants of the earth.”<sup>1</sup> The songs of angels, the rage of devils, the wickedness of the ungodly, the humble obedience of the redeemed, the wrath of the unregenerate, will all redound to his praise, when the grand scene of his Providence shall be hereafter unfolded. Let us, therefore, wonder and adore! “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”<sup>2</sup>

*2. Confide in his Protection!*

It is true, that, in declaring yourself on the Lord's side in this sinful world, you join a party which is loudly opposed; you serve a Master who has hosts of enemies; you trust a Saviour, who could not himself obtain a patient hearing—nay, who did not even open his mouth in self-defence before his clamorous foes. But come now “into the Sanctuary of God, and understand the end”<sup>3</sup> of these men—the final upshot of this strife. Look into the Scripture of truth, and you will learn, not only that the Lord's plans cannot be disconcerted—they are even carried on by means of the opposition which they encounter. When therefore you most suffer; when you are most disheartened; when you meet with most enmity from man, and are most identified with your despised God and Saviour; then be sure that your lot is most blessed. You are in the same ship with Christ; and, though you may think that he is asleep, he will shew that he can save you still from sinking. Hear how he rebukes such unreasonable distrust. “I, even I, am he that comforteth you! who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and

<sup>1</sup> Daniel iv. 35.    <sup>2</sup> Romans xi. 33.    <sup>3</sup> Psalm lxxiii. 17.

laid the foundations of the earth ; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor , as if he were ready to destroy ? and where is the fury of the oppressor ? But I am the Lord thy God , that divided the sea whose waves roared ; the Lord of Hosts is his name.”<sup>1</sup> Or, in accents of greater mildness and love, hear him say, “ These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace : in the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, let all the enemies of God learn here to

3. *Dread his Displeasure !*

It is not merely the power of God’s wrath, which I would have the hardened sinner to tremble at. At present, I would entreat him only to notice its mysterious sagacity—its secret agency. Hitherto, perhaps, you have prospered in your iniquity ; and “ because sentence against your evil work is not executed speedily, therefore your heart is fully set in you to do evil.”<sup>3</sup>

But, after what you have now heard, is this wise on your part ? Why, the very success which you have gained over your conscience—the very enjoyment that you taste in sin—may be the handle which a just and holy God is using, for bringing you at last, as an incorrigible enemy, to the pit of destruction ! Oh then let every sinner humble himself ! Repent, and accept the grace which he still offers, even to the rebellious. “ Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled, yea but a little.”<sup>3</sup> He can destroy, even in a moment ; — he can also, in a moment, forgive. May this be his merciful act towards you !—as assuredly it will be, if, throwing down the arms of your rebellion, you bow before the golden sceptre of his grace.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah ii. 12, 13, 15.

<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm ii. 12.

## SERMON XVIII.

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LUKE xxii. 44.—*And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly ; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

THE hour was now at hand, when Jesus was to make his soul an offering for sin : he was to sleep no more, till he should sleep in death. His last evening is spent in the garden, “whither he had oft resorted with his disciples ;” three only are his immediate attendants now, and they are asleep. Meanwhile, he falls on the ground, overwhelmed with the prospect of his sufferings on the following day ; and praying that, if it be consistent with the will of God, he may be excused from drinking that cup of woe : yet—“Not my will, but thine be done !” The prayer is heard—not granted : strength to bear the trial is however communicated, by the ministry of an angel ; yet this prevents not the awful scene, which my text describes. He renews his prayer : but, “being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly ; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

I shall endeavour, for your instruction, to

### I. EXPLAIN THE MYSTERIOUS SCENE.

Had Jesus Christ been nothing more than a human Prophet—sent, like other human prophets, to be a teacher of righteousness—the scene here before us would have been unaccountable. Was the Founder of

Christianity so faint-hearted, as to be afraid to die a martyr to the truth of his doctrine? If so, many of his own followers—poor, feeble, and ignorant men—have far surpassed him in fortitude. The prospect of death in their Master's service has been hailed by them with joy; and when the hour of martyrdom actually arrived, they have been enabled to triumph even at the stake. Surely, either Christ was not worthy of their devoted attachment; or his own sufferings were altogether of a different kind from their's. You will readily perceive, which of these two is the more probable supposition.

It is to be remembered, in the first place, that

1. *He was about to "bear the sins of many."*<sup>1</sup>—

The most painful death of a sinner cannot be more than equal to his own individual guilt. But that of Jesus was to bear a proportion to the guilt of all sinners—past, present, and to come. What he suffered was to equal the amount of God's hatred against our universal iniquity; so as to become available for the pardon of all that should believe. And no doubt it did so; for though it was but a single cruel death, yet the Divine and infinite dignity of him who suffered that death gave a value to it, which can never be calculated by us.

There were several accompanying circumstances which may help to account for the horror of his soul.

2. *He probably had before his mind, at the moment, every sin for which he was to suffer.*—To a holy soul, like (in some measure) unto his, the sight of a single wicked deed is shocking. The song of the lewd jester, the loud curse of the profane, the malignant sneer of the infidel, is to such a one an occasion of the keenest distress. "Horror hath taken hold upon me,"

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews ix. 28.

says the Psalmist, "because of the wicked that forsake thy law."<sup>1</sup> Who then can be surprised at the Redeemer's agony, from whose view not a single enormity could be hidden that was ever committed—and who was now to suffer for its guilt?

3. *He was to lose, for a season, the comfort of God's special presence.*—A slight matter this to the carnal mind: "God is not in all his thoughts;"<sup>2</sup> nay, he can even live "without God in the world."<sup>3</sup> But, to Jesus, the light of God's countenance was his greatest, his only joy; it had been so, even in heaven—much more upon earth. It had never yet been withdrawn or interrupted; but he must now taste even of that misery. Not only on the cross, but probably at this very moment, he felt all that a holy soul *can* feel, of God's hatred against sin, and of the wretchedness of a being who is abandoned by God.

4. *He had begun his last conflict—the fiercest because the last—with Satan.*—That Evil spirit had assailed him at the very beginning of his public ministry; but, baffled by his faith, he had "departed for a season."<sup>4</sup> The temptation was probably repeated from time to time; and always with similar disappointment. But the important day was at hand, when it must be decided whether Man should be redeemed or not; and therefore his fiercest efforts were now made against this Surety of the everlasting covenant. Who can tell what blasphemous thoughts were now suggested to the mind of Christ—what impatience—what murmuring against God? suggested, I mean, not by his own pure and spotless mind, but by Satan—who evidently has a power over the imagination of man. Our Lord's innocence of soul would render such suggestions the most hateful torture. "He suffered,

<sup>1</sup> Psal. cxix. 53.<sup>2</sup> Psal. x. 4.<sup>3</sup> Eph. ii. 12.<sup>4</sup> Luke iv. 13.

being tempted : ”<sup>1</sup> suffered—not from the pain of resisting—*that* was easy—but from the presence of the Impure spirit, and the loathsomeness of sin presented to his imagination.

All these things he was to encounter : nay, the conflict was already begun. And, with little sensible comfort from his Father, who can wonder that in his agony he prayed more earnestly ? who can feel surprised at that mysterious sweat, “as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground ? ”—All these things, however, were not only done for our salvation, but also written for our instruction. Let us, therefore, endeavour to

II. MAKE SOME PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS on the scene which has been brought before us.

1. *Behold here the evil of Sin !*

Such sins, my brethren, as you and I have committed, were the sole cause of this Agony of the Son of God ! Dream not of greater kinds of sin, as having had the largest share in producing this effect. Sins may be greater or less, as injuring human society ; but, as offences against God, they are all equally offensive—for not the smallest of them could have been forgiven, without this awful agony endured by the Saviour. In it, therefore, as in a glass, we may learn to trace our own deserts. Certainly, if God’s own Son was to make satisfaction, the very smallest sufferings would be exacted by the Justice of heaven ; yet we find that nothing less than such a death, such unknown agonies, would suffice ! Who then will say, that sin against God is a small matter ? Nay truly, it must now be acknowledged as “an evil and bitter thing”<sup>2</sup>—an infinite offence,—which could require so awful an atonement.

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews ii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah ii. 19.



2. *Let the Saviour's agony give Hope to the Sinner.*

He was to drink for thee the cup of woe; and surely he hath drunk it, even to the dregs. As far as he could, consistently with faithfulness to his Covenant with the Father, he declined it. But, even at *his* request, it was not "possible that the cup should pass from him."<sup>1</sup> What then is the just inference? It is now not possible that they, for whom he drank it, should ever have to drink it for themselves. And who are they? All who, with a penitent and godly faith, believe in him. Come, therefore, with all thy sins, to the agonizing Saviour! Return by him to the God whom thou hast forsaken; and thou shalt find, that there is not one among all thy transgressions, which that sweat of blood did not wash away.

3. *Take here an Example for the hour of distress.*

"Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly." He was ever engaged in prayer; but never before, probably, with such intensity of supplication. To this scene the Apostle seems to refer, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."<sup>2</sup>

Let his example then be imitated by his disciples. "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray."<sup>3</sup> Is any one in an agony of grief—perplexity—apprehension—pain? let him "pray more earnestly." Do not quit the throne of grace, even though your trial be prolonged. Say (with one, who "as a prince had power with God and prevailed"), "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."<sup>4</sup> You shall be heard—in

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 39. <sup>2</sup> Heb. v. 7, 8. <sup>3</sup> James v. 13. <sup>4</sup> Gen. xxxii. 26—28.

God's best time ; and answered—in God's best way. For "shall not God avenge (or succour) his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily."<sup>1</sup>

4. *Let the Impenitent tremble at the Justice of God.*

This it was, that poured such woes on the head of our Redeemer : Sin "was exacted, and He was made answerable."<sup>2</sup> But if you slight and refuse the redemption thus secured, a fresh demand will be made on you. This will be "the condemnation ; that light came into the world, and you loved darkness rather than light, because your deeds were evil."<sup>3</sup> And can you estimate the agonies which that condemnation will bring with it? See what the innocent Jesus endured, for imputed guilt alone! What then must you not suffer, for actual unpardoned sin! "I see they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"<sup>4</sup>—Verily there is no hope for the impenitent, who rejects the only salvation provided for sinners. "Of what sore punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord—And again, The Lord shall judge his people."<sup>5</sup>

Think on these things, I entreat you ; and may "God grant you repentance unto life!"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke xviii. 7, 8.      <sup>2</sup> See Bp. Lowth's translation of Isa. liii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> John iii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xxiii. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. x. 29, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Acts xi. 18.

## SERMON XIX.

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*ACTS ii. 24.—Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.*

“BLESSED be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”<sup>1</sup>—In such words doth the Apostle Peter open his first Epistle. Always ardent and affectionate in the service of his Master while on earth, he looks back with undiminished satisfaction to the wonderful scenes which he had witnessed nearly thirty years before: and it is observable, that the same event which had formed the subject of his discourse on the day of Pentecost, is still the ground of his hope when he begins to write to his scattered Christian brethren. For it is by him that the words of my text were uttered, on the day when he first stood up with the other Apostles, to preach the gospel of his risen Lord, “with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.”<sup>2</sup>—After solemnly charging his hearers with the wilful murder of Jesus, he informs them that their malice has been defeated by his Resurrection. “God,” saith he, “hath raised him up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”—Let us notice

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter i. 12.

I. THE FACT HERE STATED. "Him hath God raised up, having loosed the pains of death."

In this statement, three distinct circumstances are brought before us.

1. *That Jesus did experience everything which Death is able to inflict upon mortal man.*—It was not, as some ancient heretics pretended, the mere appearance of death, but the reality, which he underwent. He felt "the pains of death;" agonizing pain from his wounds—burning fever, producing painful thirst—together with the absence of every thing that could alleviate those pains. And so fearful and rapid was the operation of his sufferings, that, of the three who were crucified together, he alone was dead, when the hour arrived for removing the bodies. And death had the full dominion over him. He was lifted down as a helpless corpse; carried by weeping friends to a cold tomb in the rock; rolled up in grave-clothes; and left in lonely and silent darkness. Here was death in earnest; proving clearly, that, whatsoever else he might be, he was a mortal man like ourselves—"bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh."—We are next informed,

2. *That he was set free from the power of death, by being raised to life again.*—To all human appearance, the hopes of his cause were for ever buried with him in the tomb. As long as he lay there, death did its full work upon him; keeping his body in a profound and lifeless insensibility, and preparing shortly to reduce it to dust by gradual corruption. But at this point the power of death was broken. On the morning of the third day, the grave is robbed of its victory. The stone covering is rolled away by angel hands—and Jesus is again alive! "Death has no more dominion over him." He is raised, not as the widow's son at Nain—not as Lazarus, again to die—

but to wear for ever that scarred body which he has brought with him out of the sepulchre. "I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore!"<sup>1</sup>—We learn,

3. *That this event was effected by Divine power:* "him hath GOD raised up."—This circumstance perhaps may excite no wonder in your minds; 'for who, you may say, 'can raise the dead, but God only?' Unquestionably, he alone, who first "breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life," can restore it after he hath taken it away: and therefore we might have been sure beforehand, that, if Jesus were raised to life, it must be by the power of God. Call to mind, however, what he himself had openly declared, long before his death—"No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."<sup>2</sup> And therefore let us not conceive of God the Father, in this case, as acting alone—or as doing that for the Son, which the Son was now unable to do for himself. No—Jesus was as able to rise from his own grave, as he had been to call forth Lazarus from his. The Divine Person still lived, although the human body was dead.

And in fact Scripture teaches us, that each Person in the blessed Trinity took his share in effecting this glorious Resurrection. First, the Father—"The God of peace . . . brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus."<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the Son—"Destroy this temple," of my body, "and in three days I will raise it up."<sup>4</sup> Thirdly, the Holy Ghost—Jesus is "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;"<sup>5</sup> or again—he was "put to death in the flesh, but quick-

<sup>1</sup> Rev. i. 18.<sup>2</sup> John x. 18.<sup>3</sup> Hebrews xiii. 20.<sup>4</sup> John ii. 19.<sup>5</sup> Romans i. 4.

ened by the Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> These would be contradictory statements, were it not for that mysterious doctrine, that our God is one God in three Persons. That doctrine reconciles all; while it still calls upon us to wonder and adore.

But let us now, after noticing the Fact, observe

II. THE REASON ASSIGNED FOR IT. The power of death was in this case relaxed, “because *it was not possible* that he should be holden of it.”

Had Jesus so willed, death could not have *taken* hold of him; nor could it *keep* its hold one moment longer, when God commanded, “Loose him and let him go.”—The impossibility here dwelt upon, however, seems to mean something more than that arising from God’s irresistible power. There were, in fact, several reasons which rendered it impossible, that Christ should still be holden in captivity by the grave.

It could not be,

1. *Because Prophecy had long ago foretold, that it should not be*; “and the Scripture cannot be broken.” St. Peter himself argues this point, by the application of the sixteenth Psalm to Christ—“that *his* soul was not left in hell, neither *his* flesh did see corruption.”<sup>2</sup> You will find a similar prediction in Isaiah liii. 10. “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin . . . he shall prolong his days.” Add to these, the distinct and frequent predictions of Christ himself (predictions, which seem to have been more clearly understood by his enemies than by his friends), and you will soon come to the conclusion, that, if God was to be true, and the word of Jesus to be fulfilled, it was impossible that he should be detained in the grave.—Again, it could not be,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter iii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 31.

2. *Because no good end would have been answered, by the continuance of Christ under the power of death.* All that he had suffered was in order to his being "the propitiation for our sins"<sup>1</sup>—both the death which he died, and the agonies which led to it. Now those agonies needed not to be eternal, although they were an equivalent to that eternal punishment which is our desert; they needed not to be eternal—for they made up in value, what they wanted in duration. The Sufferer being infinite, the merit of his sufferings was so likewise. And for the same reason, the humiliation of the grave, once submitted to, was enough, since it was the infinitely glorious Son of God who condescended to endure it. Just as "one offering" sufficed for "the sins of many,"<sup>2</sup> so one short sojourn in the tomb of dishonour was sufficient to earn its infinite reward. More was not required—and God does nothing unnecessarily.—Again, it could not be,

3. *Because Satan's apparent triumph would then have been a real one.*—What was the chief end of Christ's coming? was it not to "destroy the works of the devil"<sup>3</sup>—to undo his doings, and overthrow his usurped kingdom—to "destroy death, and him that had the power of death, even the devil, and to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage?"<sup>4</sup> Of this, Satan himself was fully aware; and, to prevent his own defeat, left no effort untried. He assailed the mind of Jesus with temptations: he stirred up enemies against his life. Defeated in the former by Christ's holy nature, he appeared to succeed in the latter. And, as we cannot suppose him to have clearly understood those mysteries of the cross, which even "the angels desire to look into,"<sup>5</sup> he

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 2.<sup>2</sup> Heb. ix. 28.<sup>3</sup> 1 John iii. 8.<sup>4</sup> Hebrews ii. 14, 15.<sup>5</sup> 1 Peter i. 12.

possibly began to boast, that he had now triumphed over the only Redeemer of men. And had Jesus still lain in the corruption of the grave, who could have gainsaid this boast? St. Paul himself allows, that it would have been the ruin of our hopes; "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain—ye are yet in your sins."<sup>1</sup> Jesus, therefore, must needs rise again: he could do no other: it was not possible that he should continue under the power of the grave.—Once more, it could not be,

4. *Because he had still one perpetual work to perform on behalf of his people, which required his entire presence, as perfect Man, before God.*—As our Priest, he had offered the sacrifice for sins; in the same character, he had now to make continual "intercession for us."<sup>2</sup>—'He might have done this,' you say, 'in his divine Person, or by his human soul in glory.' Why not as well say, he might have made atonement without a human body? No—the presence of that living body is indispensable, as an evidence of his merit, as the pledge of his claims. Seated at God's right hand are continually seen the wounded limbs, the pierced side, the "marred visage,"<sup>3</sup> the scourged back, of our atoning Priest. They cannot now be overlooked or forgotten; they plead for sinners, in language not to be resisted—"Deliver them from going down to the pit—I have found a ransom."<sup>4</sup>

Such, brethren, is the Victory won by our Redeemer, over Sin and Satan, over Death and the Grave!—Are you "warring a good warfare" against his enemies and yours? Then you shall ere long share in his complete triumph, and be "more than conquerors through him that hath loved you."

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 17. <sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 34. <sup>3</sup> Isa. lii. 14. <sup>4</sup> Job xxxiii. 24.



## SERMON XX.

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LUKE XXIV. 32.—*And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?*

It is not too much to say, that all the histories which were ever written cannot produce a narrative more touching, more beautiful, more instructive, than that with which my text stands connected. The circumstances described took place on the third day after Jesus of Nazareth had suffered death as a criminal. Two of his disciples, overwhelmed with sadness for the loss of their Master, were retiring from Jerusalem, apparently through fear of his persecutors, to a village seven or eight miles distant—Emmaus; and with the intention, perhaps, of returning to their former worldly occupations. There was also in the party a third person—a stranger, who had joined them by the way; a man, ignorant, as it seemed, of what had been lately happening at Jerusalem—more ignorant, indeed, than they thought even a stranger could possibly have been. Nevertheless, no sooner do they explain their reasons for doubting whether the crucified Jesus could be their long-expected Redeemer, than this same stranger begins to reproach *their* ignorance, and their disbelief of the Scriptures. Moreover, by a long list of quotations from every part of the Old Testament, he convinces them that Christ *was to suffer* by the hands

of men, before he should enter into his glory ;—and t<sup>h</sup>ey ought to have known this themselves.

Well, they were strangely affected by his conversation ; and, on arriving at the end of their journey, entreated him to pass the evening with them, as day was far spent. Seeing them to be in earnest he complied. They entered the house—supper brought—on sitting down, the mysterious stranger “ took bread, blessed, brake, gave to them.” In instant the truth flashed upon their minds ; their eyes, which, during the journey, had been supernaturally “ holden,” were opened, and they knew him ; it was Jesus himself ! He immediately disappeared ; leaving them, however, in a very different state from that which he found them. They now wonder, indeed, that they had not discovered him before ; for “ Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures ? Surely we might have known, that none but Jesus could have “ spoken like this man ! ”—And with a moment’s delay they set off back again, to come to their dear brethren at Jerusalem with the glad news that “ the Lord is risen indeed.”

This story, you will acknowledge, is most interesting : but I said also that it is highly instructive. At this I shall now proceed to shew, by some practical observations, which my text (in connection with its history itself,) suggests.

#### I. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ARE THE ONLY SOURCE OF DIVINE WISDOM AND CONSOLATION.

Had the disciples been as much acquainted with them as they ought to have been, the death of Jesus would not have taken them by surprise. They would *have better* understood the design of his coming

Expecting his death, they would have learned to expect his resurrection also. Thus their duty on that mournful occasion would have been better understood: nay, they would not have mourned at all for *him*, because of his glory which was so soon to follow.

Observe, too, that in order to set them right, Jesus communicates no new truth. He carries them at once to the neglected bible, expounding there the passages concerning himself.

Let us, therefore, learn for ourselves, where the fountain of divine wisdom is to be found. Go not to human reasonings—to learned Scribes—not even to religious books, as oracles; but to these “oracles of God.” Were Jesus now on earth, he would still ask you, “What is written in the law—how reade<sup>st</sup> thou?”<sup>1</sup> Alas, many would be forced to confess, that they do not read at all. How few would be able to say, that they “searched the Scriptures daily, to see if things are so!”<sup>2</sup>

It is certain, however, that men may be well acquainted with the Scriptures, and yet not have savingly discovered those truths, which it most concerns them to know. Accordingly, Christ does not censure these disciples for not knowing, but for not believing, all that the prophets had spoken;—“O fools, and slow of heart to believe!” Be assured, brethren, that every practical difficulty in the bible arises only from your slowness of heart to believe: to all who read in meek and simple faith, it is still an unfailing source of wisdom and comfort.—But again,

## II. FOR THE FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES, WE NEED THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 11.

You have seen what benefit his disciples derived from that teaching, when he was upon earth. It had always been so. Even those who would not receive his doctrine, were constrained to admire the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; while, to willing hearers, they were “grace and truth”<sup>1</sup> itself. ‘But alas!’ (you say) ‘where shall we now behold this marvellous Teacher?’—Not in his visible human nature, I grant: yet still it is true, that he must instruct you, or you die in ignorance. But hear now how kindly he has provided, that after his departure you should still not lose the benefit of his teaching. “I will pray the Father,” said he, “and he shall send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth.”<sup>2</sup> The coming of this Comforter, he in the next verse calls his own coming—“I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you.” In like manner he adds,<sup>3</sup> “If a man love me . . . my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” And what is the design of these mysterious visits, from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? to “teach you all things!”<sup>4</sup> Yes—Christ by his Spirit is present with every disciple who needs instruction. He teaches from heaven, exactly as he taught on earth for, even then, his words without the Spirit were a dead letter, as the unbelief of many of his hearers shewed. And his exposition on the road to Emmaus would have had no effect, had he not “opened their understanding,” “while he opened to them the Scriptures.

To whom, then, will you look for a right understanding of your bible, but to the stranger of Emmaus? Who teacheth like him? Who, like him, is the Word of God, the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God?

<sup>1</sup> John i. 14.<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 16, 17.<sup>3</sup> Verse 23.<sup>4</sup> Verse 26.<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. i. 24.

**III. THIS SPIRITUAL TEACHING IS OFTEN SPECIALLY GRANTED TO TRUE DISCIPLES, WHEN ENGAGED IN HOLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNION.**

The two disciples were indeed worthy of blame for their unbelief: but in this they deserve your imitation—that, as they walked by the way, “they talked of all these things which had happened,” on the day of the Crucifixion, and on the day of the Resurrection. They understood not the things; still “they communed together and reasoned.”—And why, brethren, are we so backward to imitate them? Can any subject be more deserving, not only of our thoughts, but of our familiar conversation?

Now mark! it was at this interesting moment, that “Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.” If they had been eagerly talking of their pleasures, their business, their farm, or their merchandize, would he have thus joined them? I trow not. And therefore let those tremble, who can never converse on any thing else. The world is full enough of “unruly and vain talkers.” Oh let the people of God, at least, dwell on the most important of all subjects—the death of Christ, and redemption through him! For he is still looking through the world, to honour those who thus honour him: and when they that fear him speak often one to another, the Lord hearkens and hears; and a book of remembrance is written before him, for them that fear the Lord, and that think upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels!<sup>1</sup>

**IV. WHEN YOUR AFFECTIONS ARE WARMED BY DISCOVERIES MADE TO YOU IN THE WORD OF GOD, THEN YOU SHOULD AT ONCE RECOGNIZE THE**

<sup>1</sup> See Malachi iii. 16, 17.

PRESENCE OF JESUS, AND EARNESTLY ENTREAT HIS CONTINUANCE WITH YOU.

“ Did not our heart burn ? ” It is a reproof to themselves, for not having sooner known the friendly stranger. Beware that you be not deserving of a like reproof. If, in your reading of the Scriptures, you find that your humility is deepened, your faith in God strengthened, your love to Christ waxing warmer and warmer, and your desire to serve him stronger, you surely need be at no loss to discover the Author of feelings such as these. None but Christ himself can thus bless and break to you the bread of life. Rejoice then, if he has thus made himself known to you. But though he oft comes unexpected, he will not stand without pressing. He has other hearts to comfort as well as yours. Say to him, therefore, “ Lord, abide with us ! ” Specially let the aged Christian say, ‘ Lord abide with me, for it is towards evening ; and darkness lies before me, unless I have thy rod and thy staff to comfort me, as I approach and enter the valley of the shadow of death.’ And let those who are young in grace be not less urgent, to have the visits of Jesus repeated again and again.

Doth Jesus thus manifest himself to his true disciples, as he doth not unto the world ? He is equally present everywhere, beholding all the works of the children of men. Oh, then, “ stand in awe, and stand not ! ”

Doth Jesus here meet his waiting people secretly ? He will one day confess them openly before the whole world. May we in that day be found of him in peace and may he be seen of us, never to “ vanish ” again

## SERMON XXI.

---

**1** THESSALONIANS iv. 13, 14.—*I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

**HERE** is a Christian speaking to Christians;—none of them Christians of that questionable sort, which we constantly see around us—but Christians indeed; men who had “received the word of Christ in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost;” and who had even become examples (such was their faith and love and patience) to believers in the regions around them.<sup>1</sup> These eminent Christians were not exempted (who is?) from severe and painful trials. They had lost friends by death—probably by martyrdom; and were in danger of being “swallowed up of overmuch sorrow.” In my text, their affectionate counsellor labours to comfort them; and, as usual, his consolations are drawn from the doctrine of a crucified and risen Saviour. They are applicable, moreover, in all ages, and with equal force, to those who mourn over the ravages made by death, whether in private families, or in the Church at large. “Sorrow not,” saith he, “even as others which have no hope: for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”

<sup>1</sup> Chap. i. 6, 7.

From these words I shall take occasion to shew,

### I. WHAT IT IS TO "SLEEP IN JESUS."

To be "in Christ," is a very frequent expression in the New Testament; and its meaning may be seen by attending to various similitudes, which describe the relation subsisting between Christ and his people. Thus, for example, our Lord compares himself to a "Vine," and his true followers to "the branches."<sup>1</sup> The Church is a building, which rests on him as its "foundation."<sup>2</sup> He is the Ark, for saving lost sinners from the flood of God's wrath; and the deliverance is obtained by being *in* that Ark. In all these comparisons, the leading idea is Union; it is from union that the vine-branch derives its nourishment, and the building its strength.—Now such Union exists between Christ, and the soul that is "in Christ." It begins in a new birth—in regeneration by the Spirit of Christ. The Holy Ghost is one with the Son of God; and, through his presence, every soul in which he dwells becomes in like manner one with Christ.

From this spiritual Union two effects necessarily flow.

1. *He who is united to Christ is freed from condemnation in the sight of God.* The merits of Jesus cover all his unrighteousness and sin. However corrupt he may be by nature, however depraved by past wickedness, however feeble in present obedience, all his guilt is "blotted out,"<sup>3</sup> "cast into the depth of the sea,"<sup>4</sup> and "behind God's back,"<sup>5</sup> never more to be remembered against him. For such is the sure word of promise—"There is now no condemnation to them that are IN CHRIST JESUS."<sup>6</sup> But again,

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. xlv. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Micah vii. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. xxxviii. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. viii. 1.



2. *He who is united to Christ derives from that blessed union spiritual grace, strength and holiness.* You remember how the mere touch of the hem of Christ's garment fetched virtue out of him, to staunch the issue of blood.<sup>1</sup> And shall not the close contact, effected by the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, be much more powerful to restrain our sinful lusts, and to renew us "after the image of him that created us?" **Yes**—here is the only effectual means of our bringing forth the fruits of holiness. Our natural strength 'is perfect weakness.' The Tempter laughs at human vows and resolutions. But "he that abideth in me, and I in him," saith Jesus, "the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."<sup>2</sup> And the language of the Apostle Paul entirely accords with this statement, where he says—"If any man be IN CHRIST, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."<sup>3</sup> In fact, it is by this rule that he teaches us to examine whether we are so "in Christ," as to be justified by him; there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, "who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Here then is much room, my friends, for solemn and serious inquiry concerning your own state. Are you "in Christ?" In other words, is the Spirit of Christ in you? Have you ever yet emerged out of the awful condition in which you were born; a "child of wrath"—a "child of disobedience"—an "enemy of God?" With many, I fear, it is not the case. You live "even as others,"<sup>4</sup> "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;" some more decorously perhaps than others—yet so as to shew that you are still destitute of the Spirit of Christ. Alas, if this be so, you are not saved from condemnation; you have as yet no

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 30. <sup>2</sup> John xv. 5. <sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17. <sup>4</sup> Eph. ii. 1—3.

new heart, no spiritual grace. And I must tell you—kindly, but faithfully—that if you die in this state, you will “lift up your eyes in torments.”

Some of you may think that I have wandered from my subject; but I have not. We were to explain what it is to sleep (that is, to die) in Jesus; and the meaning is now evident. Such persons as those whom I have been speaking of—who live in Christ, and act habitually under the influence of the Spirit of Christ—must at length, notwithstanding their blessed privilege, draw near to “the house appointed for all living.”<sup>1</sup> But the act of dying can make no alteration in their state toward God. Death finds them “in Christ”—they enter the grave “in Christ”—their spirits, “absent from the body,” are “with Christ:”<sup>2</sup> the very noisomeness of the tomb itself, with its worms, corruption, and dishonour, all are sanctified to the believer, by this spiritual Union—perfumed by the fragrant of those merits of Jesus, which formed a sacrifice of a sweet savour, acceptable in the sight of God.

You need no further explanation. Oh that there were in you all an earnest desire, endeavour, and prayer, for the attainment of so blessed a state! Oh that you would now, if never before, seek for that spiritual conversion of the heart, without which you must be far from Christ, both now and for ever!

But let us proceed to consider briefly,

## II. WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THOSE WHO SLEEP IN JESUS.

1. I must begin by desiring you to notice the expression that is used, in describing the death of true believers. It is a *Sleep*—nothing more. Violent causes may have produced this sleep. It may have been

<sup>1</sup> Job xxx. 23.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 6. Phil. i. 23.

occasioned by disease—or by tortures. Yet it is but a sleep after all; sleep, moreover, without a dream, without a pang or sigh, without a chance of danger—for “there the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.”<sup>1</sup>—But, if death be only a sleep, the very word implies that there will be a wakening again—a morning of light, gladness, and joy. Be assured, that it is not without special meaning, that death is in Scripture called sleep. The death of no other creature but Man is thus named: and, in the New Testament, the term is still more closely restricted to “them that sleep in Jesus;” as though it were unfit to be given to that death—the death of the ungodly—which must be followed by “the second death.”<sup>2</sup>

2. But we need not stand criticizing the term. Here is an express *Assurance*, that “God will bring” again all those who have slept in Jesus. The meaning of this may be seen from a parallel passage—“The God of peace brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus.”<sup>3</sup> In language exactly similar, we are here told, that God will also bring up from the grave the bodies of his faithful disciples. He will bring them “with him.” They belong to him; and nothing must be lost, that hath ever belonged unto Christ. It may for a season be put away—hidden from sight—laid up for future use; but it will be re-demanded—in that day “when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.”<sup>4</sup> “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him”—both soul and body—“in glory.”<sup>5</sup>

3. The *Pledge and Earnest* of this promise is to be found in the death and resurrection of Jesus himself. Nothing could be more improbable, than both those

<sup>1</sup> Job iii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxi. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xiii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Thess. i. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Coloss. iii. 4.

events. Who could have believed, that God would come down from heaven, "in fashion as a man," and die as a malefactor? Again—who could have believed that the needy, despised, rejected, executed Jesus would so soon rise out of his grave, and be exalted to heaven? Yet "through faith we understand"<sup>1</sup> that both these events did actually come to pass! And for what purpose? In order to secure for all them that sleep in him, a similar resurrection. If therefore we believe the one, we must not doubt the other; "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again," then we must also believe that "them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"—bring them out of their graves, and exalt them to a life of glory which shall never end.

"Walk by faith," therefore, O ye servants of Jesus "and not by sight."<sup>2</sup> Whether Christian friends be snatched from you, or you be preparing to follow them remember that you "are the children of God! and, if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that ye suffer with him, that ye may be also glorified together."<sup>3</sup>

But there are "others, who have no hope!"—What! will not they also rise again? Yes—but it will be "to the resurrection of damnation." Oh that I could prevail upon them to "understand this, to consider their latter end!" For there is yet time for you to escape such hopeless misery. There is a "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of:"<sup>4</sup> may God give it you! May you so "mourn," as to be "comforted"—may you "sow in tears," so as to "reap in joy!"

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews xi. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Romans viii. 16, 17.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians v. 7.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians vii. 10.

## SERMON XXII.

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**EPHESIANS iv. 26, 27.**—*Be ye angry, and sin not : let not the sun go down upon your wrath : neither give place to the Devil.*

**T**HERE are many considerations which might serve to shew, that anger is not necessarily sinful. We must however confess, that in our bosoms, who are depraved and fallen beings, it is a feeling scarcely ever unmixed with evil : if it be not our duty therefore to oppose it altogether, we ought at least to hold it under strict and constant subjection. In doing this, we may, by God's blessing, derive great assistance from that admonition of the Apostle, which I have chosen for your instruction at the present time.

Three things are here laid down for the regulation of the passion of Anger. Here is, first,

**I. A GENERAL PRINCIPLE.** It must keep clear of sin ; “ be ye angry, and sin not.”

There is a conscience in every man, which, if fairly consulted, will seldom leave him in doubt, whether his anger transgresses this principle. That conscience will tell you, for instance, that

1. *Unjust Anger* is clearly wrong.—To be displeased with those who have committed no offence, cannot on any principle whatever be justified. Yet this is a state of mind far from uncommon. How often have you *been angry with others* for being richer than your-

selves—or happier—or more beloved—or wiser; nay, perhaps, because they had a better command of their temper than you possessed! Some men become angry on the mere suspicion of a fault; and continue their resentment, though they can find no evidence that it has been committed. Others are so ready for this passion, that they appear to be sorry where no evil can be discovered; and will rather invent a false accusation, than be without some object for their anger. All this—however common—is unjust, and therefore sinful. It cannot be said of such persons—They are angry “and sin not.”

2. *Excessive Anger* comes under the same condemnation.—It is excessive, if it be more than the fault deserves; if persisted in, after the offence is confessed and repented of; if accompanied with a disposition to retaliate on the offending party, or to take pleasure when he suffers. Yet are not these things also quite natural and common?

3. *Personal Anger* is scarcely ever without sin; yet this is the character of the greater number of cases. We are angry with the person, rather than with his misconduct; and are more apt to desire his punishment, than his repentance. Oh how different is God's dealing towards *us*! He abominates the sin: he pities and loves the sinner! The sin must be slain—mortified—crucified: the sinner he would fain convert into a friend and a child. And for this purpose, hot as his anger really is against sin, he not only has given his own Son to be a sacrifice for it, but he bears with his enemies year after year, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”<sup>1</sup> Is your displeasure thus kind—thus forbearing?

4. *Selfish Anger* may always be suspected of sin.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter iii. 9.

If you bitterly resent an unjust action or an unkind word against yourself, while you can patiently look upon the wrongs of others—is such anger pure? If crimes against society offend you, while sins committed against God give you no concern—is not selfishness still at the root of such anger? This is no ‘virtuous indignation;’ it springs from the same corrupt self-love, which makes men angry if they suffer, whether the cause be blameworthy or not. People think ‘they have a right to be angry at that which hurts them!’ I say nothing about the right—I only say, that in such cases it is the hardest thing in the world to be angry and not sin. It would be the wiser course, therefore, to waive the right, if there be any; to “cease from anger, and to forsake wrath.”<sup>1</sup>

These instances may suffice, as an illustration of the general principle here laid down, for regulating our Anger.—But St. Paul gives, for the same end,

II. A SPECIAL RULE. “Let not the Sun go down upon your wrath.”

General principles are very useful—but there is often great difficulty in applying them; and this is peculiarly the case with regard to a duty so much against nature, as the restraining of our anger. In matters of this kind, therefore, it is usual for those who know how self-love is apt to get the better of sound judgment, to form for themselves certain fixed rules—to be followed at once (when deliberately resolved upon) without any further disputing. Thus, with regard to the profitable disposal of TIME, a man will say—‘At such an hour I will always do *this*’—(whatever it may be :) ‘on such a day in the week, no visitor shall be admitted to interrupt me’—and so on.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxxvii. 8.

Not that the appointed hour will always prove to be the best for his purpose; but because, if there be no uniform rule, the duty will often be forgotten, and the time wasted.

Now you have in the text an absolute rule of this kind; and doubtless a wise one—for it is given by inspiration of God. The rule is this: Whether your anger be sinful or right, let the angry feeling be laid aside without delay. Do you ask, ‘*How soon?*’ The answer is, Before sunset: “let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

It is not our business to justify the plain commands of the all-wise God: otherwise it might be clearly shewn, that there is a depth of wisdom and mercy in this apparently arbitrary rule. Thus much at least we may remark; that, if Anger is ever to be given up, the sooner the attempt is made, the more easy it will generally be found. Wait till to-morrow—and the shame and vexation, which must arise from the remembrance of much that was sinful in your anger, will make you backward to meet the person who has displeased you. You will begin to seek relief, by aggravating his misconduct as an excuse for your own. The pride of not being the first to confess will harden your heart. Will it be for you to complain, if you find that a similar pride has been growing up in the bosom of the opposite party? Thus a quarrel is often rendered incurable, by the neglect of this simple rule—by allowing “the sun to go down upon our wrath,” without witnessing a reconciliation.

Let God’s own conduct, towards creatures who had most justly incurred his wrath, be an argument in favour of the rule which he enjoins. The very deed, which he had specially forbidden, Eve and Adam committed: with this aggravation too; they did it



under the belief that he had deceived them, and that they should now become His equals!! Well might he be angry! But how long did his wrath continue? Did he "let the Sun go down" upon it? No! He forthwith proceeded to visit the culprits. They heard him "walking in the garden in the cool of the day:" and the summons, "Adam, where art thou?" solemn as it was in the ears of the guilty, was nevertheless the summons of a reconciled Father; who came to tell them of a Saviour that should afterwards be manifested, to atone for that heinous offence.<sup>1</sup> Thus prompt let every one of *you* be, to lay aside anger. "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven,"<sup>2</sup> "let not the sun go down upon your wrath."—

St. Paul now adds

III. AN AWFUL MOTIVE. "Neither give place to the devil." Holy Fear is the Motive; fear, lest we fall under the power of our great Adversary.

There are two characters which the Devil sustains towards us: he is our Accuser, and our Tempter. In both these characters, he gains an advantage over us by means of sinful Anger.

1. *It furnishes him with a charge against us.*—And let it not be supposed that the charge is a slight one. Dream not that angry words are mere idle breath: "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."<sup>3</sup> Throughout our Saviour's sermon on the mount, there is not one sentence so fearful as that against sinful Anger: it is set on the same level with Murder.<sup>4</sup> Now all this is known to the great Accuser; and if your conduct and character be such as is here described, you "give place to him"—you furnish him with weapons against you,

<sup>1</sup> See Gen. iii. <sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 45. <sup>3</sup> Matt. xii. 37. <sup>4</sup> See Matt. v. 22.

which he will be sure to use without pity.—But again,

2. *It assists his temptations of us.*—Every one must know what a pitiable creature he is, who gives way to unbridled Anger. Only work on his passion, and you may make him believe any thing—say any thing—do any thing. ‘It would be cruel,’ you say, ‘to treat him so!’ Very true; but for that reason, Satan (who “was a murderer from the beginning,”<sup>1</sup>) at once fixes on that man as his prey, his slave, his victim. And the man unconsciously “gives place” to his Enemy. While proudly resolving not to give way to a fellow-creature, whose ill-will could do him little injury, and might have been disarmed by gentleness or yielding: he throws himself into the arms of One, who seizes the occasion for promoting the destruction of both body and soul in Hell.

All sinful Anger, whether violent or otherwise, tends this way: it strengthens the hands of the devil; the Accuser—the Tempter.—Can there be a more alarming Motive for resisting and controuling it?

Two points must be alluded to, however briefly, before we quit this subject.

How shall our past sins of Temper be blotted out and forgiven?—Only by the blood of His sacrifice, who was “meek and lowly in heart.” Bring them fearlessly to him, in contrite faith, and “you shall find rest unto your souls.”

How shall our unruly Passion be subdued for the time to come?—Instrumentally, by self-denial, watchfulness, prayer: effectually, by the grace of the Spirit of Christ, calming and converting the soul. Oh, then, despair not! You may “do all things, through Christ *which strengtheneth you!*”

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 44.

## SERMON XXIII.

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2 CORINTHIANS xii. 8, 9.—*For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

ST. PAUL had been honoured by some remarkable revelations, which his Saviour had granted to him: but such is the force of human corruption, as it remains even in the heart of an Apostle, that there was a danger lest this special favour might become fuel for pride and vain-glory. To prevent this perversion of the Lord's kindness, it was accompanied by the affliction alluded to in these figurative expressions; "there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." The trial, whatever it may have been, was so distressing, that "for this thing he besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him." And what did he gain by his earnest supplications? Relief from his burden? No—but support and encouragement under it;—and of such a kind, that, for the sake of it, he resolves even to "glory in the infirmity" which he feels.

It is to the answer of our Lord that I shall now call your more particular attention; with earnest prayer that every suffering Christian may draw comfort from his words.—You may observe in it,

I. A GENERAL TRUTH—that “the strength” — Christ “is made perfect in weakness.”

1. By “the strength” of Christ we must ~~he~~ understand, not his almighty Power in general, but ~~he~~ ability to employ that power for the relief of frail and helpless Man. This ability had always been ascribed to him by St. Paul, and by every other preacher of the Gospel : they had all spoken of him as “able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.”<sup>1</sup> Nor had they spoken more strongly, than Christ himself had spoken on the same subject. See especially that striking passage—Matt. xi. 27.

2. But in what sense can this ability be said to be “made perfect?” Was it ever imperfect? No—he who gave unto him the Spirit, “gave it not unto him by measure.”<sup>2</sup> The Mediator between God and man was fully prepared and qualified, even from the beginning, for the work which he had undertaken. The expression “*made perfect*” refers therefore to the manifestation and proof of his ability to save, rather than to the completing of what was in fact complete already. Christ’s strength could not become more perfect than it was; but it could be more perfectly displayed—could be made more discernible, more effective, more undeniable.—And, in this reply to the afflicted Apostle, he shews in what manner the perfect proof of his power to save is generally given.

3. It is made perfect “in weakness.” The weakness of man, who is to be saved, brings into view the strength of Christ in saving him.—An illustration or two will make this plain. Who is there that can so well understand the value of a staff, as the lame? To whom is the Physician’s skill so perfectly manifested, as to the sick? So the hungry man will prize even a

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews vii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 34.

dry morsel, if he can get nothing else ; while “ the full soul loatheth an honey-comb.”<sup>1</sup> In all these cases, the value of a thing is seen by the need of it. And in like manner, the strength of the grace of Christ can only be perfectly known, when we feel our own weakness ; that we deserve nothing—can do nothing—cannot even have a hope of deliverance—without *him*. Then is the time—then, when all other things seem to be against us—when we see that we are “ wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ”<sup>2</sup>—then is the time for Christ’s power to be shewn. While elated by worldly prosperity, or self-righteous pride, or vain confidence in our own strength, we think little of Christ. When we know ourselves to be nothing, then for the first time we know him to be every thing.

Now, as the great design of God the Father is to glorify Christ<sup>3</sup>—and of the Holy Spirit, to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us ;<sup>4</sup> it is needful for this end, that our misery and weakness should in the first place be made apparent—as an evidence that nothing can save us, but the exertion of Christ’s glorious power. There is but one other way in which that power can be shewn in men—namely, by consuming them as his adversaries. Oh seek rather to have the strength of his grace displayed in you ; that, while he gains the greater glory, you may not be losers, but gainers, by that which more honours him. For this purpose, then, know your own weakness—depravity—vileness : be content to learn it even by affliction, sorrow, and pain—by the most trying dispensations, by the most mortifying convictions. They will place you in the right posture for receiving spiritual strength—for “ learning Christ ”<sup>5</sup>—for knowing,

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxvii. 7.<sup>2</sup> Rev. iii. 17.<sup>3</sup> John xvii. 1.<sup>4</sup> John xvi. 14.<sup>5</sup> Eph. iv. 20.

trusting, and glorying in Him, whose grace deigns to seek and employ such opportunities of displaying itself.

But besides this general Truth, we have, in the text,

II. A PERSONAL APPLICATION OF IT,—for the direct encouragement of those who, like St. Paul, are groaning under their trials. They are anxious for immediate deliverance: but that would not so clearly manifest the power of Christ. They shall have the proof of it in another way. Still enduring their trials, they shall find that his “grace is sufficient” for them—is all that they need.

The grace of Christ is his own actual presence, by his Spirit, in the true Christian’s heart; his supporting, sanctifying, comforting presence.<sup>1</sup> And this, as he here assures every believer, shall suffice for him; for you, brethren—for me—for every tempted, afflicted soul that relies upon it.

1. *It shall enable you to bear your trials, however grievous.*—Worldly men sink beneath their load. They yield to the temptation which they find it difficult to oppose. They go mourning and murmuring all the day long. They listen to Satan’s fatal advice—they “curse God and die.”<sup>2</sup>—And does not the Christian feel in himself a tendency the same way? He does: but then he has a Refuge, which others have not. It is this grace of Christ. He seeks it by fervent communion with that Redeemer, who “was in all points tempted like himself.”<sup>3</sup> St. Paul “besought the Lord thrice;” after the example of that Lord himself, when agonizing in Gethsemane.<sup>4</sup> But, while neither the servant nor his Master obtained relief from the present trial, both of them received spiritual strength to endure it. To Jesus “there appeared an angel

<sup>1</sup> See John xiv. 18. <sup>2</sup> Job ii. 9. <sup>3</sup> Heb. iv. 15. <sup>4</sup> Matt. xxvi. 44.

strengthening him :"<sup>1</sup> to the Apostle, and to every suffering believer, the Lord of angels himself draws nigh, bringing his own all-sufficient grace for their support. Then the "tribulation worketh patience :"<sup>2</sup> then the afflicted man is enabled to say, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord ;"<sup>3</sup> and, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."<sup>4</sup>

2. *It shall make your bitterest trials productive of good.*—This is the triumph of Divine Power—to bring good out of evil. It is the work in which the Almighty has been engaged, ever since his beautiful Creation was defiled by the entrance of sin. And what his right hand is accomplishing, with regard to the Universe at large, his grace is daily effecting in each individual believer's soul. Is there a remainder of sin there ? he makes it the means of humbling his servant. Is there sorrow there ? he causes it to "yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, to them that are exercised thereby."<sup>5</sup> Are there "fightings without and fears within ?"<sup>6</sup> all these are made to draw the soul closer to Christ as its deliverer. Outward troubles become the means of escaping inward snares—as, in St. Paul's case, the "thorn in the flesh" was a means of mortifying a tendency to spiritual pride. All this the grace of Christ can do—and *will* do, for those whom he loves. It is therefore in very "faithfulness that he afflicts them."<sup>7</sup> Their sorrows are medicines ; administered, not because they are bitter, but because he knows that they will cleanse, heal, and strengthen our diseased nature.

3. *It shall teach you even to glory in your tribulations.*—A wonderful effect of grace ! that a man should not only submit, not only gain a spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 43.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 3.    <sup>3</sup> Micah vii. 9.    <sup>4</sup> Job xiii. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. xii. 11.    <sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 5.    <sup>7</sup> Psa. cxix. 75.

benefit, but even rejoice, and thank his Saviour for the chastising rod ! St. Paul, however, did this, as you see in the words after my text : moreover, he tells us,<sup>1</sup> that this was the general practice of Christians. The Saviour had himself enjoined it.<sup>2</sup> Nay, in the very songs of heaven this part of Christian experience is looked back upon with holy satisfaction—that they “ came out of great tribulation.”<sup>3</sup>—Do you ask, ‘ Whence this joy in the endurance of sorrow ? ’ *It is founded* on the blessed conviction, that chastisement is the act of a kind Father, the pledge of his love, the means of spiritual good. And *it is produced* by the direct power of Christ’s grace—enabling the sufferer to understand and credit these glorious truths, and “ filling him with all joy and peace in believing ” them, “ through the power of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>4</sup>

Is any one, here present, a sufferer ‘ in mind, body, or estate ? ’—Let not these precious words of Christ be lost upon you. Go to him, and to God by him ; “ he is able to save you to the uttermost.” But let him do it in his own way. The time will come, when you will even thank him for that “ thorn in the flesh,” which you now think so intolerable.

Does any one talk of ‘ bearing his troubles like a man,’ without patient waiting on Christ ? Oh ! he knows not yet what real trouble is : but God will ere long make him see it !—May you, in the hour of trial, be led to the Rock of Ages !

<sup>1</sup> Romans v. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. vii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew v. 11, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Romans xv. 13.



## SERMON XXIV.

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ix. 17.—*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*

are awful words ! so awful, that it might seem presumptuous in one who is a sinner like yourself to take them for the subject of a discourse to sinners. And indeed, my friends, it is not to us to speak of “the terrors of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> Necessity is laid upon us ; yea, woe is unto us”<sup>2</sup> be silent. For hear how our commission runs. I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die ; thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn him from his wicked way, to save his life ; the wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.”<sup>3</sup> Whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, it tell you, that “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

Awful words ! How completely at variance with our notion, that “God doth not regard !”<sup>4</sup> If a man is honest, honourable, and diligent in his business, you may hear it said that there can be no fear for him. In the mean time, what saith the Lord ? “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

Possibly you acknowledge the truth, yet are loath to contemplate, or look it in the face. Is

v. 11.   <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 16.   <sup>3</sup> Ezek. iii. 18.   <sup>4</sup> Psa. xciv. 7.

not such conduct, however, most unwise—improvident—dangerous? May it not be fatal?

Summon, then, your heart to the solemn consideration: and, believing these to be the very words of God himself, let us look up to him for a spiritual blessing, while I endeavour to set before you,

### I. THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED.

Two expressions are here used to describe the characters in question: “the wicked”—“the nations that forget God.” According to the frequent style of the Psalms, the latter is an explanation of the former. It may be observed, further, that the expression “*the wicked*,” shews them as seen by *us*; their “*forgetting God*” is what HIS eye is fixed upon. Or, the former describes their actual conduct; while the latter shews its source and origin. Every way, the varied expression is instructive.

1. “*The wicked*.”—This manifestly includes all those who have broken God’s righteous law, whether in will, word, or deed. Many do this openly, grossly, unblushingly: “they have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds”<sup>1</sup> of obedience. But omission is, equally with transgression, an act of wickedness. Compare, therefore, your own heart and life with God’s word, that you may see, as in a glass, what manner of men you ought to have been; and then say whether you are such as that word requires.

But perhaps you will reply, ‘At this rate, who is *not* wicked?’—It is too true, my brethren! “all have sinned”<sup>2</sup>—all *are* “wicked,” both by nature and by practice. And therefore, unless we suppose that all mankind will be “turned into hell,” we must take a different ground in explaining the meaning of this term.

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah v. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Romans iii. 23.

Eternal punishment is now restricted to those "who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> For God does not at once cast away his guilty creatures. A door of hope has been set open—a way of escape provided. Some, by God's grace, flee to this refuge, and are safe beneath the banner of Jesus Christ. But multitudes—far the greater number, alas! refuse, fight, oppose it. Now is not this a greater wickedness, than even our breach of God's commandments? You know how the culprit is dealt with in a human court of justice. If a man has been tried, condemned, and reprieved; any offences, which he may afterwards be guilty of, meet with no mercy. "Of how much merrier punishment, then, must they be thought worthy, who tread under foot"<sup>2</sup> the blood of Christ!

Still perhaps there are many who will justify themselves from the charge implied in the term "the wicked." Let your character, then, be tried by the cond expression;

2. "The nations *that forget God*."—Alas! what multitudes are there, who, without any glaring vice, tally and constantly forget God! Such unhappy persons, living "without God in the world," are, to all intents and purposes, Atheists!

But there are others—and you, perhaps, may be of their number—who sometimes think and speak of God, and even render him some outward service; but who still practically "forget" him. "God is not in all our thoughts."<sup>3</sup> You seldom make any real effort to "set him before you."<sup>4</sup> If you ever really think of Him, it is not so much from choice, as from chance. Even our outward service is often the very means of our forgetting Him. "The form of godliness"<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. i. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews x. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm x. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm xvi. 8.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 5.

satisfies our conscience : and, having kept a sabbath—heard a sermon—said a prayer—we think ourselves free, till the season, coming round again, brings back our occasional thoughts of God.

But you say, ‘ I cannot always be thinking of God ! ’ And what is this, but a confession of the fact ? Then you *do* forget God ! But why do you so ? Is the habitual thought of Him an absurdity, or an impossibility ? Nay—the blessed angels “ rest not day or night ”—the spirits of the just cease not—from admiring, loving, and adoring him ! And why should *you*, except because you have a carnal, wicked heart, which would rather think of the veriest folly than of God ? If any one will excuse his wickedness, by saying that he had “ forgotten God,” I must tell him that this forgetfulness is itself wickedness. Would such an excuse stand good in the case of a child’s neglecting and injuring his kind Parent ? O ye that are parents ! let your own heart condemn your own forgetfulness towards the Father of all.

May these considerations, by the blessing of God, be the means of opening our eyes—humbling us—and leading us to the cross of Christ, and to his sanctifying Spirit ! Then, though in reality wicked, we may still have hope.—But if men refuse this, let them hear, secondly,

## II. THE FUTURE PORTION DECREED FOR THEM : “ They shall be turned into Hell.”

Can any thing be more dreadful ? And could any words be more plain and explicit ? Not *some*, as a warning to others ; but “ all ! ” Not some hardened individuals ; but whole “ nations ” of them that forget God ! For as God’s eye can discern every single transgressor, so his hand can reach the whole multitude

of his enemies: neither will he pity, neither will he spare them.<sup>1</sup>—But let us see what insight may be gained, into the nature of this awful portion of the ungodly. There will be,

1. *Tormenting Pains.* In describing these pains, the Scripture speaks of “a lake burning with fire and brimstone;”<sup>2</sup> “everlasting fire;”<sup>3</sup> “chains of darkness;”<sup>4</sup> “a worm that dieth not.”<sup>5</sup> The exact sense of these threatenings cannot be known as yet. But certainly nothing *less* tormenting must be looked for, than the terms imply; for, as David says—“Even thereafter as a man feareth, so is thy displeasure.”<sup>6</sup>

2. *A sleepless Conscience.* This often begins before the day of wrath: after death it never ceases. We have on earth many things which produce insensibility and stupor; and we are willingly deceived. But there, the sense of guilt, and the recollection of mercy despised, will night and day harrow up the mind.

3. *Mutual Reproaches.* We see instances of this, even in the present world. If companions in crime have brought themselves into distress, how do they accuse each other! each individual being unwilling to be regarded as the cause of their mutual sufferings. But what then will be the agony of recrimination, when the seducer and the seduced, the tempter and the tempted,—consisting, in many cases, of members of the same family—shall all behold the eternal woe into which they have led and followed each other? And, above them all, Satan's triumph will be heard—a horrid triumph—that he has led captive such multitudes, together with himself, to the bottomless pit.

4. *Unrestrained and full-grown Passions.* The greatest present misery of the wicked is from the

<sup>1</sup> See Ezek. vii. 4, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxi. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xviii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Peter ii. 4. <sup>5</sup> Mark ix. 44. <sup>6</sup> Psa. xc. 11. Prayer Book.

tyranny of their "lusts, which war in their members."<sup>1</sup> Here, these passions are checked by various outward causes; especially by the restraining Providence of God. It is owing to that restraint, that this fair world is not itself a hell already. But in the other world, that world of woe, the restraint will cease. "Evil men" will there "wax worse and worse;"<sup>2</sup> till the perfection of wicked passions will produce such a fulness of misery as we can scarcely conceive. May we never know it!

5. *The certainty of eternal Despair* is the last ingredient in this cup of woe.—All other known misery has hope mingled with it: and hope will render even the worst tolerable. With this help, "the spirit of man will sustain his infirmity."<sup>3</sup> But what is that state, where it is known that God's "mercy is clear gone for ever, and he will be favourable no more?"<sup>4</sup> What is that state, where ages of suffering leave the remainder still undiminished? where "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever?"<sup>5</sup> Can you realize it? Can you dare it?

But it is painful to enlarge. "Oh that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"<sup>6</sup>—My brethren! take it as the word of a true friend, that such will most inevitably be the portion of the ungodly and the worldling. Bewarned to "flee from the wrath to come."<sup>7</sup> Come this very hour to Jesus, confessing your wickedness and seeking pardon and peace through his blood—Most joyfully will he receive you—and, in due time 'number you with his saints in glory everlasting.'

<sup>1</sup> James iv. 1. <sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 13. <sup>3</sup> Prov. xviii. 14. <sup>4</sup> Ps. lxxvii. 7. <sup>5</sup> Rev. xiv. 11. <sup>6</sup> Deut. xxxii. 29. <sup>7</sup> Matt. iii. 7.

## SERMON XXV.

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**ISAIAH xxxiii. 24.**—*And the inhabitant shall not say,  
I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be  
forgiven their iniquity.*

THE prophecy contained in this chapter is believed to have been written about the time of Sennacherib's blasphemous invasion of Judah and Jerusalem, in the reign of Hezekiah. It alternately foretells his defeat, disgrace, terror, and the shipwreck of his proud hopes; and on the other hand, the security, deliverance, joy, and prosperity of the city of David. But this last verse very strongly shews (what indeed we might have suspected all through the chapter) that the prophet was thinking of another city—"the heavenly Jerusalem"<sup>1</sup>—"whose builder and maker is God."<sup>2</sup>—Many of the preceding expressions are so highly coloured, as to be almost incapable of application to any earthly city: but surely, of heaven alone can it be with truth asserted—"The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

Two principal circumstances are dwelt upon, as constituting the bliss of heaven: There is no sorrow there—there is no condemnation there.

**I. THERE IS NO SORROW IN HEAVEN:** "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick."

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews xii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews xi. 10.

It is otherwise in this world, ruined as it has been by sin. Here "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint."<sup>1</sup> And what men universally feel, they with one consent complain of. In one way or other, every child of Adam is exclaiming, "I am sick!"

For, with some,

1. *The Body is sick.*—It is indeed formed to be so. Its death begins, at the very moment its existence begins: and every hour of life is wearing away its substance; sometimes imperceptibly, often by attacks of painful disease. And when these attacks can no longer be parried, then comes the last sickness; no matter what—it has its commission, and executes it. Strong or feeble, aged or youthful, the body falls like the mown grass; and the grave with its worms performs the rest.

But in heaven there is nothing of all this. On the contrary, as here death and sickness begin with life, there life begins at the moment that our bodies die. In due time, the body itself shall be a partaker of that life: for though "sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption; . . . and then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."<sup>2</sup>—On earth, again,

2. *The Heart is sick*—sick of "hope deferred,"<sup>3</sup> of rash and ill-judged wishes, of continual disappointments. Nothing can be more plain, than that this world is a scene of broken hearts, and disappointed hopes. Youth, I know, thinks otherwise: but youth has its experiment still to try; and is apt to forget that there must be hope at first, or there could be no disappointment afterwards. Alas! you will find that hope is all that the world has to offer: and if you seek no other hope than that of the world, even that

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 42, 54.

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs xiii. 12.



will shortly cease to delude you. While it lasts, present vexation may be softened by it; when it loses its power, nothing remains but repining, murmuring, heart-sick despair.

In heaven, no heart saith, "I am sick." No disappointment, there, of former hopes; all is actual bliss. Even hope finds no admission there. "We hope for that we see not;"<sup>1</sup> but in heaven all is sight, and knowledge, and solid experience. Even the continuance of its bliss is not properly the object of hope; it is certain and sure. Not a single doubt or sigh will ever reach its meanest inhabitant.—On earth, moreover, *3. The Soul is sick.*—And here, believe me—little of this may be accounted of—here is the most deadly ingredient in the sorrows of this world. Created in the "image" and "likeness"<sup>2</sup> of God, we were formed for purity, holiness, and obedience; and for a happiness arising out of such a state of the soul. But at corruption, which has alienated the heart from God, is become also the means of punishment to the guilty offender. Our "lusts war in our members,"<sup>3</sup> and "bring forth fruit unto death."<sup>4</sup> All the misery of the world may be traced up, more or less directly, to the influence of our corrupt nature. Worldly men cannot or will not see this. But the spiritual Christian feels it, and "groans, being burdened"<sup>5</sup> under this bondage of corruption."<sup>6</sup> Take the seventh chapter of the Romans, as a picture of the sickness of his soul, occasioned by the "sin that dwelleth in him." Every real Christian will enter into the Apostle's description, and say, "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" In heaven, O thou wretched soul, this source of

<sup>1</sup> Romans viii. 25.  
<sup>2</sup> Romans vii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis i. 26.  
<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. v. 4.

<sup>5</sup> James iv. 1.  
<sup>6</sup> Romans viii. 21.

unhappiness shall be no more. "They that shall be accounted worthy to attain that world, and the resurrection from the dead," will find a spiritual resurrection completed in their souls, and the original image and likeness of God restored. No indwelling sin will remain, to suggest evil, when we "would do good:" no Tempter, to recommend to us forbidden pleasures: no apostate, rebellious world, to revile, ensnare, or persecute the friends of God. All will be perfectly holy, without the possibility of an evil thought; and therefore perfectly blessed, without one idea of future or present sorrow. No inhabitant, there, will ever again say, "I am sick."

Still—as there can be no doubt that memory will accompany the soul into its heavenly habitation—it may be imagined by some, that the recollection of sins committed on earth must interfere with its entire felicity; producing somewhat of the feeling expressed in our solemn Communion service—'the remembrance of them is grievous unto us.' But the apprehension is groundless. That a deep sense of unworthiness will exist, there is no doubt; even the sinless angels feel this. But the painful sense of guilt will be for ever excluded, by the fact here named as the second part of the heavenly blessedness—

II. THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION IN HEAVEN:  
"the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

I am aware, that the very terms in which I have stated this glorious truth may remind you of St. Paul's declaration, that, even now, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup> You will also call to mind another Scripture truth, not less

<sup>1</sup> Romans viii. 1.

licable to the present life ; “ Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”<sup>1</sup> Both these are doctrines, on which we cannot place too much confidence : in this world of woe, they are the very bread of life to our souls ; may you and I ‘ feed them in our hearts by faith, with thanksgiving ! ’ Nevertheless, in the heavenly world, these truths will carry with them a peculiar lustre, which can never belong to them here. For instance—

1. *The forgiveness of sin will then be more certain.* I cannot ever be more certain that God is willing, that Christ is able, to save those who repent and believe in him : but it may be much more certain, that I am a real penitent and a true believer. Here every most watchful Christian is yet subject to doubts and fears. His “ hope through grace ”<sup>2</sup> is a “ good ” one, doubtless ; but it is still only hope—not actual certainty : and perhaps those who are most confident of their own state, might sometimes do well to doubt a little more. I say again, Forgiveness is certain to the real believer : but who is certain of himself ?

This question cannot be asked in heaven. “ The people that dwell therein ” are those who shall be forgiven ; and of their dwelling there it will be impossible to doubt. ‘ Here I am ’ (will each happy soul claim) ‘ in the haven where I would be ; and, because I am here, I know that I am henceforth forgiven my iniquity. ’ —May I not add, that

2. *The forgiveness of sin will then be more complete ?* It is not that I would suggest a suspicion, that God has any reserves, when he professes to pardon the penitent believer in Jesus. Far from it ! Rest assured, that if a truly “ confess your sins, he is faithful and just to forgive your sins, and to cleanse you from all un-

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxxii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 16.

righteousness.”<sup>1</sup> What! is it not written—“Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea?”<sup>2</sup> Can any remission be more complete?

It is, therefore, not so much the forgiveness itself, as the consequences of it, which will then be more entire and full. Many of the effects of sin here remain unrelieved; affliction—labour—and, above all, the inward spiritual conflict. These are not inconsistent with a state of salvation; yet are they painful memorials, “humbling us and proving us,” and furnishing the Tempter, from time to time, with the means of destroying our peace. But in heaven there will be no more of these bitter fruits of former transgression. Death is “the last enemy;”<sup>3</sup> and when he is “destroyed,” nothing more will remain to interrupt the transports of the forgiven. “They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance;”<sup>4</sup> living on thy smile—delighted with thy glory.

What taste have you, my friends, for a heaven like this? You wish for rest from the sorrows of life: but is it Rest in God that you desire? is it deliverance from sin? is it the forgiveness of your iniquity? God has provided no other heaven: beware, therefore, lest you indulge expectations, which have no warrant in the word of truth. Heaven is Holiness! Do you covet such a promotion?—If so,

What preparation are you making for a heaven like this? “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into it”—“cannot see it.”<sup>5</sup> Are you praying for this; and by patient and self-denying labour striving to mortify every disposition, that would render you “unfit for the kingdom of God?”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Micah vii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Psa.* lxxxix. 15.

<sup>5</sup> John iii. 5. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Luke ix. 62.

## SERMON XXVI.

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**PSALM xlv. 2.**—*Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.*

THIS Psalm relates to Jesus Christ, and to 'the spiritual marriage and unity that is betwixt Christ and his Church.' The latter half, beginning at the ninth verse, contains commendations, admonitions, and promises addressed to the Bride; but the praises of the Royal Bridegroom are placed foremost, as they ought to be. The Psalmist, full of the Spirit of prophecy, can scarcely stop to inform us what that "good matter" is, which his "heart is inditing"—can scarcely state that his poem is in honour of "the King"—before he bursts into that expression of admiring adoration, which you have heard in the text.

My business with you then, this morning, is to speak of Christ; a subject never unacceptable to them that love him; least of all when they meet together to partake of the appointed memorials of that love, wherewith "he first loved them."<sup>1</sup> Behold, therefore,

I. THE EXCELLENCE OF HIS BEAUTY. "Thou art fairer than the children of men."

1. It is not the beauty of his Person, on which the Psalmist dwells with such admiration.—Some have indeed imagined that he, who in all other respects

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 19.

excelled his fellow-men, must also in outward form have possessed the same superiority. On this head, however, Scripture is wholly silent; it might even be supposed from some passages, that his countenance was deficient in comeliness. Thus Isaiah foretels concerning him—"His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."<sup>1</sup> If indeed he possessed any external beauty in early life, yet sorrow, poverty, and hardship seem to have brought on something like premature infirmity; as we may conjecture from the language addressed to him, when little more than thirty, by persons who could only judge of his age from his looks—"Thou art not yet fifty years old."<sup>2</sup>

But inquiries of this kind are vain. There is no real value in personal beauty. Joseph in the house of Potiphar had little cause to be thankful for it: it was to him an occasion of danger—it has often been the cause of sin.—"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but the woman"—the man—"that feareth the Lord, they shall be praised."<sup>3</sup> No! it is for nothing of this kind that the son of Mary claims our admiration—but for

2. The beauty of his Character. Here it is, that Christ was "fairer than the children of men."

I will not, in this connection, speak of his Divinity—that sets him above all human comparison; nor of his human wisdom—that is an excellence not always deserving of praise. Christ had a more transcendent beauty:

*He was unstained by Sin.*—Of no other human being could this ever be said. The Christian, even in his righteousnesses—much more in his remaining corruptions—is ashamed to be closely looked upon. He

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs xxxi. 30.

says, "Hide thy face from my sins,"<sup>1</sup> for "I abhor myself!"<sup>2</sup> And "how much more abominable and filthy is man," in his natural state, "which drinketh iniquity like water!"<sup>3</sup>—But nothing of this kind was to be found in Jesus. Both in his original nature, in his acquired habits, and in his visible conduct, he was without sin. He was (what his people hope one day to become) harmless and undefiled;<sup>4</sup> "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."<sup>5</sup>—But, further, *He was glorious in Holiness.* To do the will of God, was his "meat"<sup>6</sup>—equally natural to him, equally gratifying and habitual, equally necessary to his very existence. "Whatsoever things were true—whatsoever things were honest—whatsoever things were just—whatsoever things were pure—whatsoever things were lovely—whatsoever things were of good report; if there were any virtue, if anything praiseworthy;"<sup>7</sup> All, all were found in him, at all times—in the highest perfection—in full and harmonious union.—And this may shew us the reason, why men in general are so blind to the excellences of the character of Christ. Unconverted sinners have no love for holiness, and therefore cannot set a due value on Him, who in this respect was "fairer than the children of men." He was, in their estimation, "no form nor comeliness, neither is there any beauty that they should desire him."<sup>8</sup> No, brethren; a new birth is required, if we would see his features as they really are. Once become "partaker" (in however small a degree) "of the Divine nature;"<sup>9</sup> and you will then "behold his glory . . . full of grace and truth."<sup>10</sup> You will not count all things but loss, for the excellency of the

<sup>1</sup> Psalm li. 9.<sup>2</sup> Job xlii. 6.<sup>3</sup> Job xv. 16.<sup>4</sup> Heb. vii. 26.<sup>5</sup> Eph. v. 27.<sup>6</sup> See John iv. 34.<sup>7</sup> Phil. iv. 8.<sup>8</sup> Isaiah liii. 2.<sup>9</sup> 2 Peter i. 4.<sup>10</sup> John i. 14.

knowledge"<sup>1</sup> of him. You will say—"How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!"<sup>2</sup> And if such be the admiration of his disciples, while they "walk by faith," what must be the rapture of those glorious inhabitants of the heavenly world, who see his face continually! Brethren, "all the angels of God" are at this moment "worshipping him;"<sup>3</sup> while the spirits of the just find their highest bliss, in beholding his glory, and singing his praises.

But again, the Psalmist dwells upon

II. THE GRACE OF HIS COMMUNICATIONS. For the Son of God did not remain at a distance, contented with the worship of angels and the love of his Father. He "was made flesh, and dwelt among us." And "what manner of communications" were those which he held with us, ignorant and sinful beings? They were all marked with grace. Never did he open his mouth, but it appeared that "grace was poured into his lips."—This may refer to

1. *The gracefulness of his address.*—It was noticed even by his unbelieving countrymen at Nazareth—for "all marvelled, at the graceful words which proceeded out of his mouth;"<sup>4</sup> and, on another occasion—"How knoweth this man letters?"<sup>5</sup> Thus many admire the style of his Gospel—they call it affecting, elegant, beautiful—who look no further. Even the Infidel, with an air of insolent condescension, allows that 'there are some fine things in the bible!!' Nay, a man may feel a secret awe, like that which made the officers exclaim—"Never man spake like this man!"<sup>6</sup> and yet not discover the real grace which flows from his lips.—It is to be seen, chiefly, in

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Luke iv. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Zech. ix. 17.

<sup>5</sup> John vii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. i. 6.

<sup>6</sup> John vii. 46.



*e graciousness of his words.*—What do they own to us—what do they proclaim? “Grace, and peace, from God the Father, and from Jesus our Lord.”<sup>1</sup> To the “labouring and den,” he cries—“Come unto me, and I will rest!”<sup>2</sup> To the afflicted—“Weep not!”<sup>3</sup> To the guilty—“I have found a Ransom!”<sup>4</sup> To the “Ye are my friends!”<sup>5</sup> Even over the he sheds the tear of compassion—“If thou own, even thou, the things that belong unto me!”<sup>6</sup> Nay, go and hear those lips yourself: will he speak to Zaccheus? to Nathanael? to Mary at Nain? to the woman that was a sinner? to the dear family at Bethany? Is it not all grace, and love and affection? Is the grace scanty? is it not poured into his lips?” But again, hear him speak—to Apostles, not to Jews only, not to those who saw, touched, and handled him—but to YOU! you he says it—“Look unto me and be ye blessed from all the ends of the earth!”<sup>7</sup> Hear again—Heaven ever will, let him come!” “I will in no wise come out.”<sup>8</sup> Go back and listen to that gracious voice which he makes for his Apostles, and observe how it proceeds—“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on me through my word.”<sup>9</sup> O sinner, whosoever thou art, that art as for thee, if thou wilt but accept the grace which he describes. To thee at this moment he is saying—“All things are ready; repent—believe my word—and be happy for evermore!”—What is this, O sinner? unmerited, rich, overflowing grace—poured out, falling from, the lips of him, who is “fairer

m. i. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xi. 28.<sup>3</sup> Luke vii. 13.

xxxiii. 24.

<sup>5</sup> John xv. 14.<sup>6</sup> Luke xix. 42.

xlv. 22.

<sup>8</sup> John vi. 37.<sup>9</sup> John xvii. 20.

than the children of men?" And will you reject—despise—and forfeit such grace?

On the third head I shall not enlarge, namely—

III. THE GLORY OF HIS REWARD, for this excellent holiness, and this condescending grace. "Therefore (saith David) God hath blessed thee for ever;" thus, in the fulness of faith, describing that as done which was as yet only promised. The Apostle Paul writing after the fulfilment had taken place, more largely states the extent of the Redeemer's reward and with the reading of his words, I shall close this part of my discourse. "God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, *in* things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

And now, Christian brethren,

WHAT THINK YE OF HIM, who has this day "prepared a table for you in the wilderness?" Is not he "wonderful?"<sup>1</sup> and that not only in his Majesty, but much more so in his Mercy? Oh then put your whole trust in him! Accept the grace which he so condescendingly offers! And let your "soul magnify the Lord, and your spirit rejoice in God your Saviour!"

WHAT WILL YOU ASK OF HIM, who is so "highly exalted?" This is a day of grace—and your petition should not be scanty, so as to dishonour his liberality. Let his own excellent beauty, therefore, suggest the Psalmist's prayer—"Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea the work of our hands establish thou it."

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 9—11.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. ix. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xc. 16, 17.

## SERMON XXVII.

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**MARK vi. 56.**—*And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.*

“HE went about doing good!”<sup>1</sup>—Yet it is not from single instances of his miraculous agency, that we can estimate the good which he did: we must realize the scenes thus rapidly alluded to in my text, if we would form any adequate conception of our Saviour’s habitual employment on earth. “Whithersoever he enters,” the place forthwith becomes one vast hospital. The applications for relief are so numerous, that, in order to shorten his labour of attending to them, they ask only the privilege of touching his clothes, as he passes down the street. And not a single failure! The thought is overpowering to the mind: and many a sick man, when he hears or reads, doubtless exclaims within himself,—‘Oh that I had been so happy, as to witness one of those days of the Son of Man!’<sup>2</sup>

Was Jesus Christ, then, guilty of partiality, in granting such favours to that age, and to that nation only? No, my friends: for he never considered these as his most valuable favours; he gave them expressly as tokens of his ability and inclination to bestow far richer blessings. His miracles of healing were types

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xvii. 22.

and pledges of that spiritual cure which, in every age and country, he is ready to work on the perishing soul of man—whenever man can be induced to apply to him for it. It is of this spiritual healing that I shall now discourse ; and the text will lead me to point out

I. THE NECESSITY FOR SUCH AN APPLICATION TO CHRIST.—It was bodily disease which brought these multitudes to seek his aid : it is disease of soul which renders a similar application necessary in our case.

Have you no such disease ? Perhaps you are not conscious of it. But do you not know, that even bodily disease came into the world by sin ? and do you think that sin has injured the body, without harming the soul ? That would indeed be strange, when you consider, that the soul is itself the source of all sin that ever was committed.—Ah ! brethren ; sin has brought on your soul diseases, less observed, perhaps, but quite as real, and far more dangerous, than any of those which shorten your earthly life.—I might name many ; but they may all be summed up in these two.

1. *You have a disease of Guilt upon you.* You are on bad terms with your Maker and Judge. He gave you a righteous law, which you have broken ; and therefore he has already condemned you to woe everlasting. You may possibly deny this, and affect to make light of your case. But you cannot get over the express word of God, which has declared—“ The soul that sinneth, it shall die ! ” <sup>1</sup> True—the worst symptoms of your case do not yet appear ; you do not yet hear the trump of judgment, nor feel the flames of hell : but it is no less true that the disease is begun, which, unless a remedy be found betimes, will infallibly bring your soul to that place of torment.

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel xviii. 4.

2. *You have a disease of Corruption upon you.* You not only *have* sinned, but you go on sinning, and you will continue so to do, unless some cure be obtained for your corrupt and depraved heart. The fear of hell may sometimes frighten you into temporary struggles against sin; but those struggles only shew how weak you are. Sin still “works in your members, to bring forth fruit unto death.”<sup>1</sup> Do you “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength?”<sup>2</sup> Does not the very idea seem strange? Are you not sometimes inclined to think those hypocrites who pretend to it? What is this but a confession, that your own heart is wrong, and that you have no power to change it? And oh what a dreadful disease must that be, which hinders you from cordially loving the Lord your God!

Surely then I have completely proved the Necessity of an application to the great Healer, Jesus of Nazareth. Whosoever thou art, I cannot err in directing thee to Christ. As there were in every place diseased bodies for him to cure, when on earth; so, “whithersoever he enters” by the preaching of his gospel—whether they be “villages, or cities, or country”—there are multitudes dying from this universal contagion; laden with guilt, and disabled by corruption. And who can heal but Christ? who, like him, can wash away either the guilt or the defilement of sin?

If such be the urgent necessity for an application to the great Physician of souls, let my text now instruct you respecting

## II. THE MANNER OF IT.

If you feel your sickness to be real, serious, and

<sup>1</sup> Romans vii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xii. 30.

fatal, it will be your wisdom to imitate the conduct of those sick persons who are here spoken of.

1. *They persuaded themselves that Christ was able to do this thing for them.*—They had indeed every reason to believe it. And so have you every assurance, that Jesus “is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.”<sup>1</sup> He no longer indeed visibly “goeth about doing good:” but his absence is for your greater advantage; for “he is at the right hand of God,” ever living to “make intercession”<sup>2</sup>—to do the work of a Mediator, for guilty and perishing souls. You must, therefore, expect great things from Christ. Never for one moment question his power, both to remove your guilt and to sanctify your heart.

2. *They put themselves in his way.* We may do the same, by attending upon the ordinances which he has appointed. This house of God is the “street” through which the Healer passes. You may be here, it is true, and get no healing—because you seek none; but if you come in simplicity, you shall find Christ not far off. His sacramental table is another place, where the Healer of souls is to be met with. Your own closet he has himself named, as a place for you to resort to. Brethren! you have none but yourselves to blame, for the continuance of your disease, if you shun the Physician’s approaches.

3. *Those who could not come of themselves, sought the help of their stronger neighbours; none of whom were so unfeeling as to refuse the needful aid.* Thus ought you to value the advice and the prayers of spiritual Christians. They have already obtained healing; and may become “helpers of your joy.”<sup>3</sup>

4. *They earnestly prayed for the blessing which*

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews vii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 34.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. i. 24.

*they desired.* They would not leave it to accident, whether Christ should see and heal them, or not. Yet, I fear, many of you are guilty of a folly like that. You are waiting (you say) in hope that Christ may one day convert and pardon you! But, alas! you wait without prayer. Brethren, this will never do! It is, indeed, a glorious truth, that Christ is often "found of them that sought him not:"<sup>1</sup> nevertheless, such persons have no right to expect his grace; millions of them have been left unnoticed, and died at last without healing—they had it not, because they asked not for it.—Observe, now, one more circumstance respecting those who came to Jesus to be cured of their diseases.

5. *They complied with the simple method which was prescribed.* This was, to touch him—"if it were but the border of his garment." And here is the most important point in our application to Christ for spiritual healing. What is it, which will at length bring the health into our souls—banish guilt, and subdue sin? What is the turning point in the cure? It is FAITH: it is actual reliance on Christ's promise—"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."<sup>2</sup> Prayer itself will effect nothing, unless it be the prayer of faith—bringing you, as it were, into contact with Christ. But a simple trust in his power and his merits will at once unite you to him, and health will be the inevitable consequence; you will be "washed—sanctified—justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."<sup>3</sup>

And now, from considering the Manner in which this application to the great Physician should be made, we pass on to notice, in the last place,

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxx. 1.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 37.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians vi. 11.

III. THE CERTAIN SUCCESS OF IT. "As many as touched him were made whole"—were healed at once.

Yet no doubt there were all sorts of cases there : some slightly affected—others apparently incurable. Had you been looking on, you would have thought that some had a far better chance than their neighbours. Some cases there were, probably, such as even the Apostles could not have healed :—it was so once. Yet behold ! all are cured, in one and the same way ; and that in an instant. If they could but touch him, they were healed immediately.

And "is the Lord's hand shortened, that it cannot save ? or is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear"<sup>2</sup> us perishing sinners also ? No, my brethren—he is "the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever."<sup>3</sup> Only come to him as they did of old—like men who feel the ~~in~~ disease, and long for deliverance ; only come in ~~his~~ prescribed way—expecting, praying, and getting in ~~to~~ close contact with him by faith ; and your most inveterate maladies shall give way. "Virtue" shall "come out of him,"<sup>4</sup> to heal your troubled conscience, and ~~to~~ repair your disordered nature. Your pardon will ~~be~~ instantaneous—your sanctification gradual, but sur-~~e~~. For ask of the generations of old : did ever any ~~tr~~ust in him, and were confounded ? Neither shall you, ~~if~~, with a true heart and lively faith, you draw nigh ~~un~~ to him, who is "mighty to save."

<sup>1</sup> See Luke ix. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah lix. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews xiii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Mark v. 30.



## SERMON XXVIII.

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**2 PETER i. 16.**—*We have not followed cunningly devised fables.*

So then, even in that early period—while Apostles were still alive—Infidelity had begun to lift its head, and to speak proud things; accounting “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God”<sup>1</sup> to be a mere fable! And do not suppose that this fact comes out by accident. The primitive teachers of Christianity never denied it; nay, they themselves record of their divine Master, that “though he had done so many miracles before” the people, “yet they believed not on him.”<sup>2</sup> St. Peter here alludes to such unbelievers; and he answers them, by urging the evidence of his own senses. “We were eye-witnesses of his majesty . . . when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Feeling, however, that this kind of evidence could not be so convincing to them as to himself, he refers them to another irresistible proof; namely—the agreement of the life, character, and doctrines of Jesus Christ, with the prophecies concerning him. This argument from the prophecies never failed to convince those who took the pains to examine it. Such an examination, however, many have not the means or opportunity of making. Nevertheless, in “a day of rebuke and blasphemy” like the present, it seems desirable

<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy i. 11.

<sup>2</sup> John xii. 37.

that the humble believer should have some clear evidence for the truth of Christianity ; that so he may “ be ready always to give an answer, with meekness and fear, to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him.”<sup>1</sup> I intend, therefore, by God’s blessing, to lay before you a few plain considerations, which, without any deep thought, may satisfy you that the Bible is no “ cunningly devised Fable.”

I. IF IT BE A FABLE, IT WAS NOT DEvised  
HALF CUNNINGLY ENOUGH.

The writers of the Holy Scriptures have put into their book many things which no impostor would ever have placed there, if he wished his fable to be believed. I do not allude to the miraculous histories—such as that of the Sun standing still, Balaam’s ass, and Jonah’s whale ; though it would be hard to say what should have put it into people’s heads to invent stories of miracles, if no miracles ever did take place—just as there never would have existed counterfeit money, if the King’s coin had not been in circulation. But I allude to many *apparent* inconsistencies in the bible, which cannot be reconciled till after close examination ; to the very wicked conduct of some Scripture characters, who yet are held up to us as saints ; to the plain warnings, that the followers of the bible must expect vexation and enmity in the world ; to the fact, that the Founder of Christianity was confessedly crucified as a malefactor. What wise man, in devising a fabulous history, would have loaded it with such difficulties as these ? Would not his “ cunning ” have been exerted, to conceal whatever might excite a suspicion, or give offence ? When, therefore, on the contrary, every thing is told in the most unguarded

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter iii. 15.

manner, without the slightest appearance of management or contrivance, we cannot but believe that the history is founded in truth.

II. IF IT BE A FABLE, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO GUESS BY WHAT CLASS OF PERSONS IT WAS DEvised.

‘*Kings*,’ perhaps, ‘invented the Bible, in order to keep their subjects in awe of their authority.’ If so, is it not strange, that the far greater number of kings mentioned in this book are described as the most wicked and worthless of mankind?—‘*Priests*,’ exclaims another, ‘were no doubt the authors.’ Yet there is a great deal written here against wicked priests also, which would scarcely have been inserted by them. Moreover, if they had been the forgers of the Bible, you would expect to find in it more precise rules about the honour to be shewn to them, and the money to be paid to them.—Was it then *the Rich*, who devised this fable? Yet what is more common in the Bible, than lessons on the worthlessness and vanity of riches? What word more awful than—“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God?”<sup>1</sup> Would a rich man, think you, have framed this sentence?—I need not ask whether the inventors of this fable are to be looked for among *the Poor*. They are otherwise engaged than in writing books. And had they had any hand in this, methinks their own hardships and their own claims would have been more frequently insisted upon.—‘Some *learned men*, doubtless, compiled this book!’ Still the same difficulty meets us. Learned men are often supposed to be proud of their wisdom; but here worldly wisdom is undervalued, and men are told that they must “become fools, if they would be” really “wise.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Matthew* xix. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *1 Cor.* iii. 18.

Here, then, is a book, for which no probable Author can be found, if it be a fable. Call it the true word of the living God, and all the difficulty vanishes. His glory alone—his interest alone—is promoted by it. Wicked men could never have devised this: if good men have done it, and called the work a Divine revelation, it must have been by God's express command.

III. IF IT BE A FABLE, IT IS UNACCOUNTABLE THAT IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN SO LONG AND SO EXTENSIVELY FOLLOWED.

The New Testament has now been in existence—as every one knows, who knows anything about the matter—for nearly one thousand eight hundred years. What can have kept up its credit so long, if it be not true? How did it gain credit at all? The first Christians were not compelled or bribed to believe it; nay, all possible means were resorted to for extinguishing the new religion. The book of the Acts describes those means; and other histories, written at the time, give a similar testimony. Contempt, torments, losses, death—these were the price that Christians had to pay for their faith. And yet men of all ranks, all characters, all dispositions, embraced this dangerous religion. If it be a fable, the learned were imposed upon, as well as the ignorant; men who had much to lose, as well as those who had nothing; the cheerful, no less than the desponding; nay, frequently, those became its most ardent followers, who set out as its most determined opposers. Witness Saul of Tarsus!—Will any thing but truth account for this?

IV. IF IT BE A FABLE, THE FOLLOWING OF IT HAS AT LEAST BEEN BENEFICIAL TO MANKIND.

*All who are acquainted with the history of former*

times, well know this, "if they would testify"—that the introduction of Christianity into any country has been the sure forerunner of civilization and improvement. Infidels themselves have acknowledged, that no Government could *now* do without it.—This, however, is the effect of Christianity, in its mere outward profession. What can it do—nay, what can it NOT do, where the Gospel is heartily believed, and faithfully acted upon? It can make the drunkard sober, the licentious chaste, the blasphemer meek and gentle, the thief honest, the murderer kind, the miser generous. It can heal the broken heart, give peace of conscience to the guilty, encourage the despairing, console the wretched. One little sentence here is worth all other books that ever were written; and, if fully believed, shall cure the most abandoned reprobate, and make him a happy and holy man. Ask you what it is? "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin!"<sup>1</sup>

If that which produces these blessed effects be only a fable after all, yet how excellent is that fable! how "worthy of all men to be received" as verity and truth!—Once more,

V. IF IT BE A FABLE, I MUST NEVERTHELESS FOLLOW IT, TILL YOU CAN SHEW ME SOME MORE EXCELLENT WAY.

I want a guide in my ignorance; I want a comforter in my troubles.—Is Human Reason that guide? Alas! I find cause to distrust *that*, at every step which I take. It barely suffices to steer me clear of a thousand errors, between me and my fellow-creatures; but it tells me nothing of my Creator—of the means of pleasing him, or of his purposes respecting me. I find heathen philosophers all blundering in the dark, simply

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 7.

to discover whether they had a Creator or no ; and “ professing themselves wise they became fools.” Reason, moreover, cannot keep me from dying, nor quiet my fear of that which shall come after death. What then can Reason do for me, when I shall have cast away Christ and his precious Gospel ?—Again, Is Self-gratification the better comforter ? What ! to follow the devices and desires of my own heart, in spite of this forbidding fable ? Something might be said for this, if, when the Bible were gone, we could then follow our own desires. But I find human law standing in my way, when I have rejected the Divine law. I must still suffer restraint ;—and surely it were more tolerable, from a holy and heavenly Father, than from a mere fellow-worm. Even when unbounded self-gratification is in my power, sooner or later I smart for using it. Thus it is, then :—to comply with the Bible is at first painful, but delightful afterwards ; to follow my own lusts, is at first pleasing, but painful afterwards—“ at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”<sup>2</sup> And is this your more excellent way ?

I will pursue the subject no further ; but close with one important remark, addressed to those who suffer idle doubts still to linger in their minds. *If the Gospel be not a fable, it is TRUTH ; and Truth of such a nature, that you will be saved or lost, according as you believe or neglect it.* It must be “ followed ;” it must affect your heart, and influence your life ! If it do not this, you may well wish it to be a fable—but can your wishes or vain words avail against the Almighty, to overthrow His truth ? Oh, then, humble yourselves before Him. “ Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established ; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.”<sup>3</sup> “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 22. <sup>2</sup> Prov. xxiii. 32. <sup>3</sup> 2 Chron. xx. 20. <sup>4</sup> Acta xvi. 31.

## SERMON XXIX.

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**MARK ii. 27.**—*And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man.*

THESE words were spoken by our Lord in answer to the absurd accusation, that he had permitted his disciples to profane the Sabbath, by plucking the ears of corn as they passed through the fields upon that sacred day. He shewed them, that the most sacred things might be regarded as common, where the necessities of man required relief; as Abiathar the Priest did not scruple to satisfy the hunger of David and his men with the consecrated shew-bread, when there was no other at hand. Applying this to the fourth Commandment, he asserted, that even the Sabbath, though ordained for the express honour of God, was nevertheless intended for the benefit of man; hence it could never be unlawful to satisfy craving hunger, or to perform any work of real necessity, on the Sabbath day.

I propose, by God's assistance, to examine this short declaration of Christ—that “the Sabbath was made for man;” in other words, to shew you, more at large, God's benevolent design in the institution of the Sabbath.

“The Sabbath was made FOR MAN!”—yes, even when it was first instituted, in the day of man's innocence, in the Garden of Eden. The occasion, indeed, of its appointment, was God's ceasing from the work of creation. In memory of that great work, and of the completion of it, every seventh day was to be

regarded (while all the seven were holy) as more peculiarly holy to the Lord, the Creator. But had man himself no interest in this honour paid to his Maker? Yes; it led him to a closer intercourse—a more devout contemplation—a more enlarged admiration—and a more intelligent love—of Him whom he thus honoured. And thus the Lord made even his own special honour the means of increasing the happiness of his creatures.

Since the Fall of man, more abundant considerations have arisen, which shew that God both foresaw that lamentable event, and, in prospect of it, graciously “made” his “Sabbath for man.” I will mention three.—He appointed it

I. AS A PERIODICAL REPRIEVE FROM THE CURSE,  
TO WHICH MAN IS NOW DOOMED.

As soon as Adam transgressed, “Cursed” (said the Lord) “is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.”<sup>1</sup> The design of this curse, as it might seem, was uninterrupted labour. But the Sabbath (previously ordained, and doubtless with this view,) provides an interval of rest. On the six days we are not only compelled, but it is our duty, to toil and labour: on the seventh, this is not demanded; and God’s mercy ensures that it shall not be necessary. He might have so ordained the curse, that the intermission of this one day should reproduce all the thorns and thistles which the previous toil had subdued, and irrecoverably stop the growth of vegetation. But, instead of this, he gives a day of safe rest; taking upon himself, as it were, the labour of the earth for this day, that man may be eased of the curse and be thankful.

<sup>1</sup> Genesis iii. 17.



But the curse of labour was aimed, not at the body alone, but at the mind with all its faculties. Consequently the rest, offered by the Sabbath, is a blessed relief, not only from the work of the hands, but also from that anxious care, which, when continued without interruption, wears down the spirits, sours the heart, and often prompts language like that of Job—"My soul chooseth strangling rather than life; I loathe it: I would not live alway!"<sup>1</sup> Little do those wretched beings, who make no difference between the Sabbath and other days—little do they know what comfort and relief it would have yielded them, if used as God intended it. Had they been content to comply with his direction—"not doing their own ways, not finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words"<sup>2</sup>—they would have found, that God was on this day doing, thinking, speaking for them; securing (far more effectually than *they* could secure) that very object, in which their anxieties were fixed—and giving them rest in the mean time.—Again, he appointed the Sabbath

## II. AS A SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR OBTAINING SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.

For see what this same curse of labour and toil, had it been unremitting, would have led to! Fallen man has not only a body to feed, but also a soul to save—a God to whom he must get reconciled—a depth of spiritual misery, guilt, and shame, out of which he must, if possible, be raised up. Now whatever means might have been provided for this purpose by a God of compassion, they could have availed us nothing, had man actually possessed no leisure to make use of them. The sinner's whole life must have been toil, and sweat,

<sup>1</sup> Job vii. 15, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah lviii. 13.

and labour, like that of the beasts; and, like them also, without hope. The eye, fixed on the ground, could never have raised itself up to heaven. The bread of this life might indeed have been secured, by that incessant "sweat of the brow;"<sup>1</sup> but the bread of eternal life must have been abandoned. It is so now, by those miserable men, who will not use the opportunity thus graciously afforded by the God of mercy. They say 'they have not time to attend to the salvation of their souls!' See now, I pray you, whether this be true or no! Does not God give them one day in seven specially for this end? Does he not secure you against any loss while using it? Are you not informed, that it is "made for you"—that it is quite consistent with every earthly interest, while it is at the same time rich in blessings for your guilty and perishing soul?

And what are these blessings, which the day of rest puts within your reach? *The House of Prayer* is one of them: with a promise that God will there meet you, because "his name" is in it; and that Christ will be "in the midst" of "two or three" who "are gathered together in his name."<sup>2</sup> *The Ministration of his Gospel* is another; whereby the most ignorant may become acquainted with "the things that belong to their peace"<sup>3</sup>—may learn to repent, may find a Saviour, may taste his love, may gain strength against temptation, and joy that shall endure all through the week of sorrow. A third blessing the Sabbath offers, in *the Influence of the Holy Spirit*; gently leading you into your closet, for more intimate converse with your own heart and with God. John the disciple "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day,"<sup>4</sup> receiving supernatural revelations. It is on this day also that

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 19. <sup>2</sup> Matt. xviii. 20. <sup>3</sup> Luke xix. 42. <sup>4</sup> Rev. i. 10.

his ordinary influences most abound ; as witness the convictions and impressions, which you yourself have felt on many sabbaths, but have not always retained during the succeeding week-days of earthly care and toil.—Is not the Sabbath then a most benevolent appointment—“ made *for* man ? ”

Once more—it was ordained,

### III. AS A TYPE, FORETASTE, AND PLEDGE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S REST IN GLORY.

“ There remaineth a rest ” (the Apostle's word literally means, *the keeping of a Sabbath*) “ for the people of God.”<sup>1</sup> This is the view universally given us of the heavenly state. It is Rest ! No more curse—no more exclusion from God—no more sin—no more sorrow. Not “ by the sweat of their brow shall they eat bread ; ” but—“ they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, or any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”<sup>2</sup> Blessed state ! which, however, none can appreciate or understand, but those who now value the Lord's Sabbaths. These are the very same thing—so far as heaven can exist on earth. As the contempt of the Sabbath is generally a flood-gate set open to vice and profligacy, to a hardened heart, and to final despair ; so the spiritual keeping of it is the beginning of heaven—the means of present grace, and the earnest of future glory. He who delights thus to serve God on earth, shall “ serve him day and night in his temple ”<sup>3</sup> above ; and shall be a pillar in that temple, never more to go out.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. vii. 16, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. vii. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. iii. 12.

*How blind, then, are they to their own best interests, who set at nought this holy day!*

This, perhaps, is a view of the subject which you have never before taken. You may have felt that you were guilty—but not that you were foolish. Nay, you may have applauded your own wisdom, in using up for your worldly advantage, a portion of time which others, as you conceive, unprofitably waste. But your wisdom, alas! has failed you here. Even in *worldly* advantage, you have no reason to think that you have been the least gainer—either in comfort, in enjoyment, or in profit. Nay, on the credit of Christ's word, I will boldly assert that you have been a loser! If the Sabbath be “made FOR you,” no doubt the breach of it has been AGAINST you; as you shall bitterly find, when the whole account of profit and loss shall be clearly set forth in the last day.—But of *spiritual* gains what a countless multitude have you thrown away! Your soul has been starved—it is become leaner and leaner—it is possibly at the point of death—death eternal! “What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? and what”—when once it is lost—“what shall he give in exchange for his soul?”<sup>1</sup>

“Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked,” “forsake your own mercy:” “but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory, both now and for ever. Amen.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mark viii. 36, 37.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter iii. 17, 18. Jonah ii. 8.

## SERMON XXX.

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**LUKE xxiv. 50—53.**—*And he led them out as far as to Bethany ; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy ; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*

THE humiliation of the Son of God was now drawing rapidly to a close. He had “ accomplished his decease at Jerusalem : ” <sup>1</sup> he had risen victorious from the grave : and, during forty days, he had been living among his disciples—convincing them, “ by many infallible proofs,” <sup>2</sup> that he was indeed restored to life. There remained but one more thing to be done—that for which he had prayed, in John xvii. 5—“ And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” This prayer, as you have heard in my text, was fulfilled ; he “ ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things,” <sup>3</sup> and become Head over his Church for ever.—The text sets before us

### I. THE LAST ACTS OF THE REDEEMER ON EARTH.

1. *He selects a suitable place, from which to take his departure.*—He had conversed with his friends at Jerusalem “ in an inner chamber,” “ when the doors

<sup>1</sup> Luke ix. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 10.

were shut....for fear of the Jews;"<sup>1</sup> and if secret was desirable then, it was now much more so. The last glorious display was not intended for malicious Pharisees, for unbelieving Sadducees and Scribblers. Evidence enough had been given to them, and more would hereafter be added. The *public* ministry of Jesus ended with his great Sacrifice; and what remains of earthly intercourse shall be devoted exclusively to his friends. He therefore "led them out" from Jerusalem, "as far as to Bethany."

It has been argued, that this could not be the town of Martha and Mary—because *that* Bethany was three miles from Jerusalem; whereas the Apostles are said to have returned from this sight, only "a sabbath day's journey"<sup>2</sup>—that is to say, one mile. But we may we not suppose, that he first visited the town of Bethany, even if he did afterwards return part of the way, before he ascended up to heaven? The supposition is far from being improbable; and, if such was the fact, what a touching circumstance was here! We cannot forget Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. Whom he loveth, "he loveth unto the end:"<sup>3</sup> and when they are to see him no more, they shall be of those who see him the last. It is one of the manifold proofs of the Saviour's kind affection. Love him, brethren, as that pious family did, and you shall see greater things than this. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant."

2. *He solemnly blesses his Disciples.*—He had from his deeds been blessing them, from the first moment of their acquaintance with him; for he had converted their souls, and had instructed them in the things relating to his kingdom. But he now does it by express outward act. With uplifted hands, he c

<sup>1</sup> John xi. 19.    <sup>2</sup> Acts i. 12.    <sup>3</sup> John xiii. 1.    <sup>4</sup> Psalm xxv.

on his Father to protect, comfort, sanctify, and prosper them.—If you would know what gifts that blessing included, you may see them fully enumerated in John xvii : he could ask no greater—he would ask no less—than are there recorded. “ Neither prayed he for these alone, but for them also which should afterwards believe on him, through their word.”<sup>1</sup> Happy believer ! who can by faith see those hands of love still stretched over him, and apply to himself the Saviour’s blessing ! May such be your privilege and mine : for I wot that he whom thou, Lord, blessest, is blessed indeed.—At length,

3. *He ascends up to heaven.* Here was no imposition ! St. Luke in another place tells us, that the act was done “ while they beheld.”<sup>2</sup>—My text describes the circumstantial order of the event. “ He was parted from them”—literally, “ he stood aside from them ;” both to prevent interruption, and that all might see the whole transaction. Then—“ he was carried up ;” moving towards heaven in full view of the whole party, till, at length, “ a cloud received him out of their sight.” Carried ? by whom ? By hosts of invisible beings—“ angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.”<sup>3</sup> For now was fulfilled that which was spoken of the Lord by David—“ The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels : the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive.”<sup>4</sup> Doubtless, there were angels assisting on the occasion ; for we find two of them returning in visible form, to comfort the disciples with a promise, that he would hereafter come again in like manner from heaven.<sup>5</sup> As, therefore, we believe that he rose

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 20.<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 9.<sup>3</sup> Psa. ciii. 20.<sup>4</sup> Psa. lxxviii. 17, 18.<sup>5</sup> Acts i. 11.

from the dead, so also do we believe that he is “*↑* into heaven . . . angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”<sup>1</sup>

I have one more remark on this head. “*It came to pass, while he blessed them, he was taken up. Did his ascension, then, interrupt and cut short his blessing? No; he still continued to bless as he went up. No—nor is the blessing yet at an end: for it is that Christ, who, as St. Paul says, “is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”*<sup>2</sup> His intercession, therefore, is still proceeding though “clouds have received him out of our sight. May it avail for *us*—to make us his friends and companions in glory!—Observe now

## II. THE FIRST ACTS OF THE REDEEMED AT HIS DEPARTURE.

1. *They worshipped him.*—Remember that! appointed teachers of the Christian religion “*↑* shipped” Christ—it was their very first act, after they had ceased to behold him. And do not suppose it was merely some respectful inclination of the body, such as is meant in our Marriage service.<sup>3</sup> No, it was holy Adoration, as to the invisible God; accompanied, doubtless, by such words as Thomas once permitted to use without censure—“*My Lord and my God!*”<sup>4</sup> Had they given such honour to two angels, they would have met with a rebuke, that which St. John afterwards received under similar circumstances—“*See thou do it not! . . . worship God!*”<sup>5</sup> But in worshipping Jesus, they *did* worship God; and were therefore blameless.

Who then are they, that would rob us of our

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 22.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 34.    <sup>3</sup> ‘With my body I thee worship’

<sup>4</sup> John xi. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. xxii. 8, 9.



by pretending that Jesus was but a man like ourselves? Brethren, be on your guard against such deceivers! If Christ be not God, how can he save? how can he make reconciliation? how can he judge the world? how can he deliver from hell? "But we have not so learned Christ." We will yet adore him, whom "all the angels of God worship." 'Thou art the king of glory, O Christ!'—our almighty Saviour—our Divine Redeemer!—But to return to the disciples—

2. *They were filled with joy—great joy.* Oh how different from what they had once anticipated! "Now I go my way to him that sent me; and because I say this, sorrow hath filled your heart."<sup>2</sup> But now, when he *does* this, they are "filled with joy." Whence this difference? It was because Jesus had now opened their understanding, to discern the mystery of his sufferings and his glory. The Comforter, moreover, I am inclined to believe, was immediately sent down, with his sanctifying influences; although for his miraculous gifts they had yet to wait ten days longer.

Now therefore they rejoiced, *First*, On their Lord's account. "If ye loved me," he had said, "ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father."<sup>3</sup> And this their joy is now fulfilled. Loving Christ with perfect love, they rejoice that his humiliation is ended—his warfare accomplished—his work finished—his crown won—his throne ascended. They rejoice, *Secondly*, On their own account. All was now plain in the system of that redemption, concerning which they had long formed such erroneous expectations. They now saw it to be far better, that he should reign unseen *for* them, than dwell visibly *among* them. They knew that he was "ascended to his Father and their Father,

<sup>1</sup> *Te Deum.*<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 5, 6.<sup>3</sup> John xiv. 28.

to his God and their God.”<sup>1</sup> And how could they but rejoice, that he was “gone to prepare a place for them”<sup>2</sup> also?—Brethren! have you no sympathy with this “great joy?” If you have, I need say no more to excite your thankfulness. If not, I can tell you the cause. Christ is not yours; you have not yet chosen, loved, followed him! Yet even now it is not too late. You may yet seek and enjoy his love; and then like these disciples, you will indeed think it blessed news, that “him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”<sup>3</sup>

3. *In the use of appointed Means, they sought and expected his gifts of grace.* In Jerusalem were they, to receive the “promise of the Father;”<sup>4</sup> therefore they at once returned thither. On their arrival, behold them “continually in the temple, praising and blessing God!” continually—that is, at every appointed service. Surrounded as they were by formal and ignorant worshippers, how different their views, hopes, and feelings!—Yet such, brethren, as theirs were—such, by divine grace, may yours also be. What though other gain no blessing in public worship, in hearing the word in the holy Communion; yet this need not be the case with you. Only look up to the Lord of the temple and he will make it a Bethel to your soul. “In the breaking of bread” Jesus himself shall be “known of you,”<sup>5</sup> if by faith you seek him. Oh then, “enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his court with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 17.<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 2.<sup>3</sup> Acts v. 31.<sup>4</sup> Acts i. 4.<sup>5</sup> Luke xxiv. 35.<sup>6</sup> Psalm c. 4, 5.

## SERMON XXXI.

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HOSEA xiv. 5.—*I will be as the Dew unto Israel.*

IN this most affecting chapter, we have the Reconciliation at length accomplished, between an offended God, and the rebellious people with whom he had been chiding all through the prophecy of Hosea. Having resolved to spare, convert, and heal them, God's compassion begins to yearn over his outcasts; and he finds a sacred satisfaction in enumerating the blessings which he purposes to bestow upon them. The first is that which you hear in my text: "I will be as the Dew unto Israel."—Let us consider,

### I. TO WHOM THE BLESSING IS PROMISED.

"TO ISRAEL"—that is, you will say, to the Jewish church and people; since nothing is more common in the Scriptures, than to speak of the nation collectively as "Israel." True; yet you must recollect the important distinction made by St. Paul—"They are not all Israel which are of Israel:"<sup>1</sup> and again—"We are the circumcision" (that is, the only genuine Israel) "who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."<sup>2</sup> Now, blessed be God's mercy! if we "sinners of the Gentiles" are enabled to do this, then are we also his Israel; entitled to a share in all those spiritual promises, which were once thought to be the exclusive

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 3.

property of "Israel after the flesh." "Because of unbelief they are broken off;" and by faith "we are grafted in."<sup>1</sup>

If you call to mind from whom the people of God derived this name of ISRAEL, it will furnish you with some marks for ascertaining whether you belong to that privileged body. They received it from that eminent ancestor of theirs, Jacob—concerning whom there are two remarkable circumstances recorded. The first is

1. *God's special Choice of him* to be the heir of his promises. This choice was made prior to his birth; and was therefore altogether of grace unmerited. It was made in preference to his elder brother.<sup>2</sup> It was carried into execution by converting grace, working with afflictions—and by various acts of an over-ruling and guiding providence; which brought him at length to a dying bed in sure and certain hope of God's salvation.<sup>3</sup>

If, then, we would bear his name, and share in the promises made to Israel, we, like him, must be (as St. Peter expresses it) "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup> In other words—"we must be born again,"<sup>5</sup> through sovereign grace; called, converted, justified, sanctified. But alas! how few, even in countries called Christian, possess this indispensable mark of being "Israelites indeed!"

2. *His "Power with God" in prayer* is the other distinguishing point in the history of Jacob; it was this, indeed, which procured for him the name of Israel.—You have the account in Genesis xxxii. One whole night, of deep and bitter sorrow, did he

<sup>1</sup> Romans xi. 19, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Romans ix. 11—13.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xlviii. 15, 16; xlix. 18

<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter i. 2.

<sup>5</sup> John iii. 7.

spend in earnest and persevering prayer. Not words alone were the expression of his desires: there was also a significant action appointed by the Lord; to be an emblem, while it continued, of Jacob's importunity—and of God's compliance, when it ceased. "There wrestled a man with him"—but Jacob prevailed. Hosea himself reminds you of the transaction, and informs us who this man was—even "the Lord God of Hosts; the Lord is his memorial."<sup>1</sup>

And most assuredly, in this point also, the spiritual Israelite must resemble him, who "as a prince had power with God." Prayer is the very life's breath of a true believer. For he knows his manifold wants, dangers, sorrows, and weakness; and he has found his way to the throne of grace—has met with Jesus there, the great "Angel of the covenant"—and in his name daily seeks those mercies, those assistances, which he needs. And, as he seeks, so he also finds. His prayers are heard—nay, even his groanings are heard.<sup>2</sup> God communes with him and blesses him; and he receives that new name—ISRAEL, the prince of God!

What title have you, my friends, to a name so distinguished? Are you in the number of the Lord's chosen, praying people? Do they own you as their brethren in Christ?—If so, consider now

## II. THE NATURE OF THE BLESSING SET BEFORE THEM. "I will be *as the Dew* unto Israel."

On comparing this with other similar promises in the word of God, it seems evident, that under the emblem of Dew, the influences of the Holy Spirit are here intended. Those influences are very frequently likened to *water*;<sup>3</sup> and almost every idea suggested by that comparison, is equally implied in this. But

<sup>1</sup> *Hosea xii. 5.* <sup>2</sup> *Rom. viii. 26.* <sup>3</sup> See *Isa. xlv. 3.* *John vii. 37—39.*

there are also some additional thoughts conveyed, when God promises to be “as the Dew unto Israel.”

Reflect, then, that

1. *DEW is refreshing and fertilizing.*—After a day of blazing and burning heat, how are the plants revived at night-fall—nay, how is man himself refreshed after his toils! The same cause gives also further life and strength to the soil; not only reviving that which had begun to droop, but supplying moisture for future growth.<sup>1</sup>—But what is this, in comparison of the spiritual consolations, the growth in grace, which the Holy Ghost bestows on the Israel of God? When the soul is dry and withered—barren and unfruitful—dead to spiritual hope and feeling; then, if “the Spirit be poured from on high,” “the wilderness becomes a fruitful field.”<sup>2</sup> Then he gives “all joy and peace in believing”<sup>3</sup>—enlarged love to God and man—strength against sin and Satan—and a “growing up into Christ in all things.”<sup>4</sup> Oh seek this heavenly dew, to make you holy and happy—yea, holy and *therefore* happy!

2. *DEW is, in many Eastern lands, the ONLY means for producing these effects.*—Those countries that are blessed, like ours, with occasional rains, and with abundance of springs, may less feel the value of the dew. But in many eastern climes, they know not these blessings of our temperate region. The soil beneath is naturally dry, and the heavens seldom give forth showers; hence dew is their grand relief. In Egypt, as the prophet Zechariah intimates, they had no rain.<sup>5</sup> Even in Paradise, a mist was at first the only means of refreshment.—A true emblem this, of the grace of the Holy Spirit. It is the believer's

<sup>1</sup> See Verses 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xxxii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xv. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. iv. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Zech. xiv. 18.

only resource, for light and life, for comfort and strength. Of earthly cisterns, "broken cisterns that can hold no water," there may be an almost endless variety: there *must* be, indeed; otherwise even foolish man would soon discover his folly in "hewing them out." But there is only one "Fountain of living water!"<sup>1</sup> Without this dew of heaven, you must pine away and die. No natural skill, no human aid, no earthly gratification, can make up for its loss.

3. *Dew is mild and grateful in the manner of its influence.*—It comes not like those torrents, which, while they doubtless fertilize, often create at the same time irreparable damage; nor even like that singular blessing of Egypt, the periodical overflow of the Nile—enriching at last, but interrupting meanwhile all the business of the field. No—it falls mildly, gently, gradually, uniformly. I know not that a single undesirable effect was ever attributed to the dew.—And thus softly do the influences of the Spirit drop on the heart of a true believer; with a steady and gradual power, softening what is rugged, cheering without overpowering, instructing without misleading. For human instruction—even the purest—generally communicates some evil with its best good. None, like our divine Teacher, can truly say—"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain on the tender herb, and as the showers on the grass."<sup>2</sup> In this the Spirit resembles that "meek and lowly" Saviour, who never "breaks the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax."<sup>3</sup>

4. *Dew is generally imperceptible in its approaches.* In fact, it is present in the air, and has already begun its work of refreshment, even before it becomes visible. And does not our Lord himself give a similar account

<sup>1</sup> Jer. ii. 13.<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxxii. 2.<sup>3</sup> Isa. xlii. 3.

of that Spirit, by whose grace the soul must be "born of God?" "The wind," saith he, "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup> Hence, when we seek the conversion of others, or spiritual comfort and edification for ourselves, we are not to be disappointed because the effect comes not suddenly or perceptibly. The work is often begun, ere you are conscious of it. The earnestness of prayer, the deep mourning for sin, the sorrowful sighing of the contrite heart—painful as these things may be—are the harbingers of the sacred Dew. It is when men are repenting and turning to the Lord, that the "times of refreshing"<sup>2</sup> are not far off. And well does the true Israelite know, how often he has discovered, by the effects, the actual presence of that Spirit, whom he just before conceived to be at a distance. Like the disciples going to Emmaus, he has felt his "heart burn within him:"<sup>3</sup> like the Psalmist—"While I was musing, the fire kindled,"<sup>4</sup> and I could doubt no more.—Lastly,

5. *Dew comes only in the night*, when human labour is exhausted, and can do no more for the fertility of the ground.—Thus doth the Spirit of Christ wait, till we have done our best, and find how weak and ineffectual that best is. When at length it appears, that we cannot do—speak—think one good thing, *we* may imagine that all is lost; but comfort is then the nearest. Only open thy hot and fainting bosom to the God of Israel, and he will then be to thee "as the dew." He comes not till he is wanted—till he is desired; then he will "revive the spirit of the humble, and revive the heart of the contrite ones."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 8.<sup>2</sup> See Acts iii. 19.<sup>3</sup> Luke xxiv. 32.<sup>4</sup> Psalm xxxix. 3.<sup>5</sup> Isaiah lvii. 15.



## SERMON XXXII.

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LUKE xi. 13.—*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

ONE great impediment, by which multitudes are hindered from becoming truly and decidedly religious, is a secret disbelief of the promises of God.

This is strikingly the case, with regard to those promises which refer to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Few will deny, that every thing good in us must come from him : you also know and admit, that his divine influence must be sought by continual prayer. But do you then pray for it? do you hope and expect to obtain it? May it not be doubted whether you really believe, after all, that a blessing so unspeakably valuable is within your reach?

Our Lord well knew, that even in Christian hearts there is much of this secret unacknowledged Infidelity ; and thus he replies to it. “ If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ? ”—Now let us consider

I. THE FACT HERE TAKEN FOR GRANTED—that earthly Parents, though evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children.

*It is not said, that parents know how to choose*

always what is best for their children. In this respect indeed it is notorious, that a lamentable defect of wisdom often prevails. Parental affection frequently blinds the judgment ; and leads to the choice, not of that which is wholesome and really good, but of that which will yield present gratification—to the children—to the parents, or to both.

Neither would our Lord assert, that parental affection is never overpowered by other principles. Lord's misbehaviour has sometimes induced a father to disinherit his son. The pressure of hunger has constrained delicate mothers even to kill and eat their infants.<sup>1</sup> On the parent has been so brutalized, by intemperance and other vices, as to forget the wants of his helpless family.

Yet, after all these drawbacks, our Lord's statement (as a general one) is remarkably borne out by facts. No parent is easily induced to hate or neglect his children. "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" Were it possible for a parent to act thus, he would be regarded as a monster in society.

And this is the more remarkable, on account of the circumstance added by our Lord ; that human parents are naturally "evil," that is, corrupt and depraved creatures—beings that have forsaken God, and set at naught his commandments. In all other respects, how completely are men under the dominion of selfishness ! Every body—every thing—must give way to them ! must minister to their gratification, be the consequences what they may ! Not so, however, in the case of their children's wants. Here, for the moment, selfishness seems extinguished. The father will rather

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Kings vi. 28, 29.

keep the "stone" or the "serpent" for himself, than refuse his child the "bread" or the "fish," that is needful for his support.

Such, and so strong, is natural affection : a principle, necessary indeed for the preservation of the species ; and so deeply implanted by our all-wise Creator, that it still survives the wreck of everything else, that once was good in Man. " Many waters cannot quench it."

Let us now attend to

II. THE DOCTRINE, FOR THE ILLUSTRATION OF WHICH THIS FACT IS ALLUDED TO.—The doctrine is, that your Heavenly Father is much more likely to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

It is evidently not the power of working miracles, that is here promised in answer to prayer. That spiritual influence was never given to Christians generally—but only according to God's sovereign will. But here is no limitation ; this promise is to all—to all that ask : it must needs refer, therefore, to those ordinary gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, without which we can neither ' think those things that be good,' nor ' bring the same to good effect.'

Now by following up the comparison which our Lord makes in the text, we shall see abundant reason for concluding, that God is not only *as* affectionate, but infinitely more so, than any human benefactor.—For I may ask, in the first place, with Moses,

1. "*Is not he thy Father, that hath bought thee ? hath he not made thee and established thee ?*"<sup>1</sup> Has not Creation made you his children ? and did he make you to destroy you ? ' But you think of your sins ! ' You do well ; but think also of the unfathomable mines of love, which those sins have brought to

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxxii. 6.

light! Has not the Redemption of Christ Jesus made you his children anew? At the least, you cannot deny that it has suspended his wrath: and, in the meantime, it sets before you the means of becoming children indeed; for, "as many as receive" Christ, "to them giveth he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."<sup>1</sup>—Now can you suppose, that, while a mere instinct (and in many it is nothing more) causes sinful men to love the children to whom they have given birth—can you suppose, I say, that God will disregard the work of his own hands, and the purchase of his own blood? Would not such a supposition place him even below his irrational creatures? Ah! brethren; the fact of God's affection for us is infinitely more certain, than human parental affection itself could have been, if we had never witnessed its effects, or felt its constraining influence.—I may ask, again,

2. *What can this heavenly Father bestow on his children, more worthy the name of a "good gift," than his Holy Spirit? He has given his Son; yet even that gift avails us not, till the Spirit be added.*

It is evident, from the change in our Lord's language, that the gift of the Holy Spirit was that good thing on which his thoughts were at present fixed. You would naturally have expected him to say—"If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give *good gifts* to them that ask him." In fact, it is in this form that St. Matthew has recorded the promise.<sup>2</sup> Probably, Jesus spoke it both ways; thus indirectly testifying, that, of all good gifts, the gift of the Holy Spirit is the best.

And is it not? See what we are without it! Dead

<sup>1</sup> John i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 11.

in sins—heirs of woe—enemies of him, whose children we ought to be. Worst of all, we are ignorant of the whole matter; resolved not to change—unable, if we would. But see also, what the grace of the Holy Spirit does for them that have it! It opens men's eyes to see their danger. It shews them a Refuge—inclines them to seek it—enables them to find it. It cleanses, persuades, comforts, guides, reclaims, strengthens, sanctifies the soul; prepares it for heaven, and then conducts it thither. You and I may be ignorant of the full value of this gift: but he—the Father—knows how good a gift it is; and therefore he reserved it as the crowning honour wherewith to invest his Son, that he might dispense it among his people. “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that THE LORD GOD might dwell among them.”<sup>1</sup>—I ask, further,

3. *Is the spiritual bounty of our heavenly Father limited, like the affection of earthly parents, to those who can prove that they are his children?* No—it is far more wide and expansive. It is offered to all that are his children by Creation; without stopping to consider whether they are such by Regeneration or no. For here again our Lord makes a change in his language. It is not—“How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to his children;” but—“to them that ask him.”—When therefore you feel your need of that good gift, let not the Tempter discourage you, by suggesting doubts, whether you are yet children of God. No such qualification is here required. Ask for his Spirit, and he will make you children—if not such before; or he will deal with you as children, if already made such.—And all this he does

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxviii. 18.

even at the expense of him, who is his only-begot Son. For when his gracious heart had conceived plan of enlarging his family, by "bringing many s to glory,"<sup>1</sup> he "spared not his own Son."<sup>2</sup> After kindness towards rebels, what can he possibly withhold? He gave his Son when we asked nothing "how much more then will he give his Holy Spirit them that ask him?"

And now, dear brethren, why is it that any among you remains destitute of the Spirit of Christ? The answer is surely obvious enough—"Ye have it because ye ask not."<sup>3</sup> But then the question returns in a different form: why do you not ask? Oh it was enough to amaze us, did we not know our own unbelief and carnal mind, to see men thus dead to their own interest. Talk of difficulties in the Bible—mysteries of Providence! Where will you find a mystery more difficult, than this coldness of man, contrasted with God's affectionate liberality?

Is there some faint desire arising in thy heart? hasten to improve it! take advantage of the gale, which is to waft thee heavenwards. Pray, pray, pray to the Father which seeth in secret. He is at hand, already listening for thy prayer. Let him break thy prayerless heart—for he will then bind up thy broken heart, "make all his goodness pass before thee."<sup>4</sup> And thus shall the promise be at length fulfilled—"I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a Father unto Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 10.<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 32.<sup>3</sup> James iv. 2.<sup>4</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 19.<sup>5</sup> Jerem. xxxi. 9.

## SERMON XXXIII.

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GENESIS xlix. 4.—*Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.*

“GATHER yourselves together,” says the dying Jacob to his family, “that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.” In fulfilment of this design, he delivers a series of predictions, describing the future condition of the several tribes that were to spring from his twelve sons. He begins with his first-born, Reuben—who probably expected, from his birth-right, some pre-eminent dignity. Reuben’s character, moreover, had been distinguished by several good points. But, resisting one temptation, he had yielded to another, not less horrible: and the Spirit of God directed Jacob to foretell, that the future insignificance of his family would be such as his crime deserved. “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”

These words will lead me to point out

I. WHAT OUGHT TO BE THE GRAND AIM OF EVERY REASONABLE BEING—To “excel.”

Surely this is a doctrine, to which the human heart will at once agree. For who does not wish to enjoy superiority, however small may be his hope of attaining it? Such superiority, however, as worldly men desire, is altogether unworthy of pursuit. It is, at the best, a pre-eminence in things that last only for a time, and that “perish in the using”—in wealth, power, beauty,

strength—in worldly rank, or worldly wisdom. All these, as the wisest of men has proved, are “vanity of vanities;”<sup>1</sup> and vain therefore is the ambition which covets, or the heart that idolizes them.

There is nevertheless

1. *An Excellence of Dignity*, which all ought to desire; an “honour that cometh of God only”—a distinction, “whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Various are the titles given in Scripture to those who possess it. They are “joint heirs with Christ”<sup>2</sup>—and he, moreover, “is not ashamed to call them brethren.”<sup>3</sup> They are “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”<sup>4</sup> That very dignity, of which Reuben was deprived, is in a spiritual sense bestowed on them: they are “the church of the *first-born* ;”<sup>5</sup> registered in heaven, though dwelling on earth—and looking forward to that blessed world, as their own sure inheritance. To this dignity they are promoted by the mere grace of God, received by faith in Christ. By the same faith they are justified, though ungodly; accounted righteous though actually sinners; and entitled to glory, as the purchase of the Saviour’s merit, though in themselves deserving of nothing but hell.—Such is the preeminent dignity bestowed on all true believers: and thus is the Scripture fulfilled which saith, “The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.”<sup>7</sup>

There is, secondly,

2. *An Excellence of Power* which should also be our aim. As God’s servants, we have to resist his enemy and ours, the Devil; and we shall never be happy, but as we prevail over him. Sin is another powerful foe, that has often cast down the strongest

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. i. 2.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 17.    <sup>3</sup> Heb. ii. 11.    <sup>4</sup> Eph. ii. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. xii. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. iv. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Prov. xii. 26.



men, and we must labour that it may not "have dominion over us."<sup>1</sup> That it *shall* not, is promised to all real believers; and the fulfilment of that promise must be our constant desire. The spirit of the world is a continual enemy; intimidating, or ensnaring the disciple of Jesus.—A measure of power over all these enemies is given to the Christian, as soon as he truly believes in Christ. Nevertheless, he must not stand still. He must strive, by Divine grace, to excel and surpass his former efforts, to "fight the good fight,"<sup>2</sup> to "press toward the mark,"<sup>3</sup> and to "grow in grace."<sup>4</sup>—Had Reuben possessed this excellence of power, he had not lost his excellence of dignity. Oh take heed, brethren, that you fall not after his example!—I would now shew you,

## II. WHAT MAY BE REGARDED AS ONE OF THE MOST FATAL IMPEDIMENTS TO THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS OBJECT.

The hindrance is not, as in many worldly pursuits, that the desire is unreasonable, and therefore hopeless; that it is contrary to the will of God, and therefore sinful; that it is impracticable, and therefore absurd. The cause that any fall short is not in the object, but in themselves—in their own instability; "unstable as water, they shall not," they cannot "excel." Did you never stand to admire the beautiful reflection of the clouds and sky from a sheet of clear transparent water? and do you not remember how the first rising of a breeze destroyed the fair picture in an instant? Have you never read of the joy with which a ship's company began their voyage upon a calm sea; and then of the storms which followed that deceitful calm, hurrying them down to a watery grave? Such

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 14. <sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 7. <sup>3</sup> Phil. iii. 14. <sup>4</sup> 2 Peter iii. 18.

also is the condition of those who are unstable in religion.

Deep and deceitful as the ocean,  
And like the waves, in constant motion,

they disappoint all the hopes of their godly friends, and never attain to any eminence among the disciples of Christ.—For example,

1. If you are unstable *in your principles*—ever wavering and changing in your views of Christian truth—how is it likely that you should gain any assurance of ranking high in the favour of God? any growing power against the enemies of your soul? So long as you are “carried about with every wind of doctrine,” you must needs continue “children”<sup>1</sup> in grace. Yet such is the state of mind in many who hear the Gospel. They give a sort of consent to every truth that is set before them: but they do not, like the Bereans, “search the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so.”<sup>2</sup> Hence, if a new doctrine is brought before them, they are ready to be drawn another way; and are thus continually hindered, and kept back from vigorously running their race—“ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”<sup>3</sup>—Again,

2. If you are unstable *in your purposes*, it will be impossible for you to excel.—Many appear at one time resolved and firm, as though they would “take the kingdom of heaven by force;”<sup>4</sup> and are offended, should a doubt be expressed whether they truly love the Saviour: but their religion at another time seems laid aside for a while, and their heart is all for the world. Now they are eager to lay themselves out for the good of their fellow-creatures and the glory of God, as men who are persuaded that religion is the

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 14. <sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 11. <sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 7. <sup>4</sup> Matt. xi. 12.

"one thing needful:"<sup>1</sup> at other times they can quote no text except "Be not righteous overmuch." What can be said of such persons? It is clear they never can excel—nay, it is a wonder, if they ever had any real purpose of being servants of Christ. We know in what manner he regards them—"I would thou wert cold or hot; so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."<sup>2</sup>

3. If you are unstable in *your practice*, the same consequence must needs follow; there can be no excellence. God will not honour you—you will not honour God. It will, as in the former cases, be doubtful what your rank is—whether with the friends or the enemies of Christ. Your dominion over the "sin that more easily besets you"<sup>3</sup> will never increase: nay, you will give it more and more advantage against you; till, in some evil hour, you may be tempted to throw off even the appearance of resisting it. "The last state of that man," saith our Lord, "is worse than the first!"<sup>4</sup>

But now, in the last place, I would briefly point out

### III. BY WHAT MEANS THIS IMPEDIMENT MAY BE SURMOUNTED.

1. *Seek to have a more abiding sense of your own Insufficiency.* The advice may sound strange; but this is one indispensable condition of spiritual success. Christ's "strength is made perfect in weakness." A man may for years be floundering on in his own strength, and getting further and further from real godliness. And why is this? Because God has determined to make us know by bitter experience, if we will not learn it from him, that without Christ, "we can do nothing."<sup>5</sup> You have felt this—but you

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. iii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xi. 26.

<sup>5</sup> John xv. 5.

have not felt it enough. The corrupt heart still retains some of its self-complacency : oh, brethren, the sooner you banish it all, the better ! “ Humble yourselves, therefore, and he will lift you up.”

2. *Expose your heart more habitually to the Influences of the Spirit of God.* This cannot be done, without often retiring to your chamber, away from worldly influence. Then let prayer bring God before you ; and you must tell him again and again of your wants, your dangers, your weakness, and the fickleness of your principles, purposes, and practice. And seeing that this instability endangers your everlasting hopes, you must imitate Him who, “ being in an agony, prayed more earnestly.”<sup>1</sup> Oh how the Lord delights in such prayer ! Open your Bible now, and see whether he does not ! In that book, moreover, you will find many answers to your prayers.—By such converse with God, the power of corruption will be weakened, and grace will gain strength.

3. *Realize more solemnly the fact, that God never changes.* HE is not “ unstable as water ; ” but firm as that “ sea of glass like unto crystal,”<sup>2</sup> on which his throne stands. His holiness is ever the same—abhorring, condemning, punishing sin : think of this, lest you forget that sin is “ exceeding sinful.” His mercy and grace are ever the same—free for the vilest, sufficient for the weakest, always within reach ; “ every one that asketh receiveth ” them. Come then to this well, and draw ! it “ springeth up into everlasting life ! ” Remember God and be firm. Grieve him not, for he is holy—distrust him not for he is faithful. Take fresh courage, when you hear him say—“ I am the Lord, I change not ; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. iv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Mal. iii. 6.

## SERMON XXXIV.

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REVELATION i. 5, 6.—*Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

THE writer of this book is “ the disciple whom Jesus loved.”<sup>1</sup> We are not told, that he in return loved Jesus more than others : nor was it necessary ; for the affection of John toward his Saviour betrays itself in every page of his writings. How strikingly so in the Scripture before us ! After explaining the purport of this book, he begins with the usual prayer for “ grace and peace,” to be granted to those whom he is addressing. He names as the Giver of these blessings, *first*, God the Father ; *secondly*, God the Holy Ghost ; *thirdly*, God the Son. For a moment, he dwells on the glorious attributes of Jesus Christ : but presently his heart burns within him ; he overflows with grateful affection, and bursts into a song of adoration to that second person of the sacred Trinity, to whom all his hopes were owing.—Now, my Christian brethren, if we possess one spark of that love which animated the breast of St. John, his words are calculated to fan it into a flame ; for they very powerfully set before us,

### I. THE BENEFITS CONFERRED ON HIS PEOPLE BY JESUS CHRIST.

1. *He “ loved us.”*—It is not the general love of

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 23.

God to the whole world, but the special love of Christ to his elect, which is here intended. "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath" indeed "appeared to all men:"<sup>1</sup> yet it will hereafter be found, that only a part of mankind are "washed from their sins." Now it is of these alone that the text says—He loved them.

What then is this love of Christ to his people? Is it, like man's love for man, founded on desert and merit? No—"he loved us, even when we were dead in sins,"<sup>2</sup> saith another Apostle. Is it, as earthly love too often is, unreasonable and capricious? No—it is doubtless founded in wisdom; but in a wisdom which we cannot fathom. It is easy, indeed, to start objections and difficulties on the subject. But if we attempt to unravel the mystery, we are soon compelled to say of the Saviour's choice, as he did of his Father's—"Even so, because it seemed good in thy sight!"<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, let this be regarded as certain—that, with no inducement on our side, he pitied our misery and ruin: he desired to do us spiritual good: he makes his own choice of the objects of his grace. These three things are implied in that love of Christ, from which all his deeds of mercy flowed; compassion—desire—purpose. Happy they, who finding this purpose effected in their own souls by the converting Spirit of Christ, can repose themselves on the assurance of his everlasting love!

2. *He hath "washed us from our sins."*

The form of the expression is striking. It is not merely that he has saved us from the punishment of our sins; the sins themselves are "washed away."—In fact, the sinner, enlightened from above, much more abhors the stain of sin, than he dreads the punishment

<sup>1</sup> Titus ii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 4, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xi. 26.

threatened. With unhumbled souls it is otherwise. Save them from hell, and they would feel no further concern. But in those whom Christ hath loved, and drawn to himself, there is a load of guilt oppressing them, a sense of vile misbehaviour, a deep conviction that sin is "exceeding sinful."<sup>1</sup> "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee."<sup>2</sup> "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer?"<sup>3</sup>—Moreover, it is with regard to this stain of guilt, that human wisdom furnishes the least hope. Future amendment might seem practicable; but how can past offences be done away? "How shall" sinful "man be just with God?"<sup>4</sup> No—there is a blot here, too deep to be scoured out by any device of man's wisdom. Hence it is written—"Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God."<sup>5</sup>

Blessed be God! what is impossible with man, is possible with Christ. "He hath washed us;" and, strange to tell, it is "with blood!" nay, stranger still, "with his own blood!" 'What,' you may reply—'are not our sins "red like crimson"?'<sup>6</sup> already? and can the application of blood make them white? Was not the shedding of Christ's blood, moreover, an act of wicked murder? and can one sin blot out another?'—Yes, brethren; as shed by man, it did indeed call for vengeance; but as shed by himself it was "a propitiation," for the sins even of many whose hands had been imbrued in it. To shed his own blood was, in fact, the main purpose for which he took our fleshly nature. After spending thirty years of his short life in the deepest retirement, he devoted but three to his public ministry; when, on a sudden—none being aware

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 13.<sup>2</sup> Psalm lxxiii. 22.<sup>3</sup> Job xl. 4.<sup>4</sup> Job ix. 2.<sup>5</sup> Jer. ii. 22.<sup>6</sup> Isa. i. 18.

of his design—he takes the cross for an altar, his body for a sacrifice; and in his own person he officiates as the Priest, “offering himself without spot to God.”<sup>1</sup> All being duly performed, “he bows his head, and gives up the ghost.” Do you ask, ‘What can all this mean?’ It means, that he has “borne your sins in his own body on the tree,”<sup>2</sup> and has shed his blood to wash them away. And God has accepted the atonement; insomuch that, from that day, all who ever have believed, all who ever shall believe in him, “are washed and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus.”<sup>3</sup>

3. *He “hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.”*

Here I must not enlarge; nevertheless, glorious things are contained in these words. By whom are they spoken? By a poor slave, condemned to toil in the mines, “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ!”<sup>4</sup> Yet this man calls himself a *King*! Yes, brethren; and such are all true believers. In the strength of Christ, they have dominion over sin—the world—fear—nay, over death itself. It is their privilege to rise above every thing here below; and they gradually realize the privilege. At length they will be “more than conquerors”—and all “through him that hath loved them.”<sup>5</sup> You may equally wonder to hear John call himself a *Priest*; when he knew that Jesus was the only atoning High priest, and that “there remaineth no more sacrifice” to be made “for sin.”<sup>6</sup> Priests, however, had other tasks besides that of making atonement. They had to plead the virtue of it, when it had been made; and also to offer various sacrifices of thanksgiving. This honourable office belongs now to every servant of Christ. Each

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter ii. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii. 37.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. x. 26.



has “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;”<sup>1</sup> each is to present his “sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart”<sup>2</sup>—“of praise” and of good works;<sup>3</sup> and the offering is accepted—not for his own, but for the Saviour’s worthiness.

Have you then this royalty—this power over Sin and Satan? Are you fulfilling this priesthood—drawing nigh to God in daily prayer and holy service? This is a point, respecting which there ought to be no uncertainty. Examine yourselves, therefore; and if Christ has made you a partaker of this benefit, be assured that the others also are already yours; he hath “loved” *you*—he hath “washed” *you*.

Now let the people of Christ remember

II. THE RETURN WHICH HE MERITS AT THEIR HAND. It is expressed in the doxology which concludes the text—“To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen!”

For all these mercies, then, we must

1. *Adore him as our God*; “To him be glory!”—You find in the bible no such ascription of glory to any creature. Whenever it was offered to Saints, they declined it; as you see in the conduct of Peter, at Cornelius’s house<sup>4</sup>—of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra.<sup>5</sup> Even angels, which are greater in power and might, will have nothing to do with such adoration.<sup>6</sup> But Jesus calmly and constantly accepts it. And why so? Because it is his right. He “is over all, God blessed for ever.”<sup>7</sup> Even the glory of the Father is so intimately connected with his, that “he who honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Psa. li. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Acts x. 25, 26.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xiv. 15.

<sup>6</sup> See Rev. xxii. 8, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. ix. 5.

<sup>8</sup> John v. 23.

And does not such adoration well become us? Oh what had we been, but for his love? What would even his pity have availed us, without his blood? Whom *should* we praise for victory over sin, and access to God, but the Divine Procurer of these inestimable benefits? Let us then “believe in God,” but let us “believe also in him”<sup>1</sup>—pray to God, but pray also to him—worship and glorify God, but never forget to adore him also, who is “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person.”<sup>2</sup>

2. *Obey him as our Sovereign*; “To him be dominion!”—It is a peculiar dominion which he has earned. As God, he had a claim on our loyalty already: it is now his due, as Mediator between God and man.”<sup>3</sup> It is the human body of Christ Jesus, which now fills the throne; and oh what a demand upon our love and obedience doth it make! Do you not see it to be most just and fitting, that he who redeemed the world should govern the world? Well, you are members of that world! Nay, some of you have actually received his benefits; he has loved you, has washed you, has made you kings and priests in virtue of his atonement. Is it so indeed? Then “what will you render to him for his mercies?” What can you offer less, than your body and spirit, your heart, will, life, talents, every thing? Pray then that his kingdom may come, throughout the world—but see especially that it be set up in your own heart. And, having once begun to serve him, never draw back; but let the glory be his, and the dominion his, for ever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 1.<sup>2</sup> Hebrews i. 3.<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 5.

## SERMON XXXV.

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NEHEMIAH xiii. 22.—*Remember me, O my God, concerning this also; and spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy.*

SELDOM has there been known a more devoted lover of his country, than Nehemiah. He lived at the time when the Jews were returning from their long captivity in Babylon; but he was not one of the first who availed themselves of this privilege. The good providence of God had brought him into favour with the Persian kings, who were now the lords of Babylon; and it was probably expected, that he would do more service by remaining at court, than by accompanying his friends to Jerusalem. A period at length arrived, when his influence was of the highest importance—and he very promptly exerted it. Having heard that the situation of his Jewish countrymen was become very distressing and precarious, he obtained a commission, authorizing him to restore the city and walls of Jerusalem, at the expense of the Persian government. He himself likewise undertook a journey thither, in order to ensure the execution of the design. On his arrival, he not only had to encounter many difficulties and dangers, but he found also that many abuses had crept in among the Jews themselves, which called for correction. To all these duties he applied himself with vigour; labouring, during a course of twelve years, to promote the truest welfare of his country, in a manner the most disinterested.

It was not, however, the mere love of country which influenced his proceedings. Every part of his short history shews, that the fear and love of God formed the principal motive with Nehemiah. You will see in what way this motive operated upon him, by attending to the prayer which he offers in my text. May the Spirit of God be our instructor, while we meditate upon it!—Here is,

I. AN APPEAL TO GOD'S APPROBATION. "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also!"

It is a striking peculiarity in the character of Nehemiah, that he often makes appeals of this kind. If, out of regard to the poverty of his countrymen, he declines receiving many perquisites which had been taken by former governors, he informs us—"So did not I, because of the fear of God;" and then immediately refers himself to that God, for a blessing—"Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people!"<sup>1</sup> In the present chapter we have two other instances, beside that in the text; the very last words being—"Remember me, O my God, for good!" He had previously written—"Remember me, O my God, concerning this; and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof."<sup>2</sup>

It will clearly appear by and by, that this manner of speaking was not dictated by a vain-glorious or self-righteous spirit. For the present, I wish you to observe, that it was, in fact, an humble appeal to God—

1. *From Man's Judgment.*—Nehemiah was a person of rank, a courtier. His distinguished abilities had hitherto recommended him to notice in the royal palace, notwithstanding the disgrace of his Jewish

<sup>1</sup> Chap. v. 15. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 14.

birth. But he had now engaged in an undertaking, which was likely enough to appear enthusiastic and contemptible in the eyes of his Persian acquaintance. But what then? It was for God's honour, and therefore he "despises this shame," casting himself upon the approbation of God.

The principle on which this excellent man acted, is the same that has governed the servants of God in all ages. This it was that influenced Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Paul. It is the principle of Faith—rendering an unseen God visible. Such men look for a future "recompense of reward,"<sup>1</sup> promised by him who cannot lie. They "set the Lord always before them."<sup>2</sup> They are "moved with fear."<sup>3</sup> They count it "a small thing to be judged of man's judgment."<sup>4</sup> Hence, when misunderstood, undervalued, and misrepresented by the world, they can appeal to the God whom they willingly serve. Are *you* content thus to suffer reproach for His name, brethren? Amidst "patient continuance in well-doing,"<sup>5</sup> is it enough for you to say—"Let them curse, but bless Thou?"<sup>6</sup>

Nehemiah makes his appeal to God, secondly,

2. *From Man's Enmity*.—While one party satisfied themselves with despising, there was another party in Jerusalem itself, who hated and opposed his proceedings. These were they who, being Jews, had connected themselves by marriage with heathen families—or the offspring of such marriages. To such persons, the revival of pure Jewish manners was very provoking. Others found that their worldly interests were interfered with, by Nehemiah's strict enforcing of the Sabbath. It is in immediate reference to their enmity, that the appeal in my text is made.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xvi. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. ii. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm cix. 28.

And is there not still the same enmity in the world, against real practical godliness? If magistrates—or ministers—or heads of families—endeavour within the circle of their influence to check vice, or to enforce obedience to God's commands, do not they too often meet with the most violent and determined opposition? "The carnal mind," alas! is still "enmity against God,"<sup>1</sup> and against his people. But shall they therefore shrink before it? No! persevere like Nehemiah; making your appeal to the approbation of a faithful God. He will not overlook the smallest effort, which you, from love to him and his honour, may be enabled to make. He must needs own that Christian zeal, which proceeds only from his quickening Spirit.

Nehemiah appeals, thirdly,

3. *From Man's Ingratitude.*—It was here that this zealous servant of God found his greatest trial. He might easily have disregarded man's judgment, knowing it to be merely carnal; or have endured man's enmity, through natural courage and resolution. But how painful, when the very persons, whom in God's name he sought to benefit, were cold, reluctant, unfeeling! Yet Nehemiah's was no solitary case. The same mortification is often experienced by the Ministers of Jesus Christ. If the success of our ministry were our only consolation, many of us would be wretched indeed. But we look to him who sent us: we appeal from human neglect to God's approbation. In every plan which we adopt for your good, or that of your families—take it as you may—we turn to our Master; "Remember us concerning this also!" Private Christians have need to make the same appeal; so thankless is an ungodly world, for their holy admonitions, their fervent prayers, and their pious example. And it is a

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 7.

great mercy, dear brethren, that you have such a Friend, to remember and reward what others undervalue.

‘But is there no danger, lest appeals of this kind should lead us to “trust in ourselves that we are righteous, and to despise others?”’ Not if we make them in the spirit of Nehemiah: for you find, in close connection with this appeal,

## II. A CONTRITE PRAYER FOR GOD’S FORGIVENESS.

“Spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy.”

Every real believer, while he habitually labours “to have a conscience void of offence,”<sup>1</sup> maintains at the same time a deep feeling of humility, and of his need of sparing mercy. Let us endeavour to trace the course of this feeling.

1. *After all that he has done for God’s service, Nehemiah cannot forget, that there is a load of original and actual sin recorded against him, for which no subsequent obedience can make satisfaction.*—This the self-righteous man loses sight of, in his self-complacency for some few good deeds which he thinks he has performed: but a truly enlightened conscience still “remembers it and is confounded.”<sup>2</sup> To the very last he feels, that, without wonderful forbearance on the part of his God, he must perish. And you must feel this too, my brethren. What if you are somewhat less wicked than others? yet have not you also sinned enough to condemn you to hell? And how then can any thing save you from it, unless God spare you?

2. *Nehemiah finds even his religious actions so stained with sin, that, though he may appeal from Man, he cannot make them a plea of merit before God.* And such also is the feeling of every genuine believer. ‘Is not the believer then a true penitent? Yes—but

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. xvi. 63.

in many respects, even his repentance needs to be repented of. 'Is he not a new creature?' Yes—but he still "finds a law within him, that, when he would do good, evil is present with him."<sup>1</sup> 'Has he not forsaken many sins, and performed many duties?' Yes—but how? Imperfectly—with mixed motives—irregularly—weariedly. "All his righteousnesses," then, are no better than "filthy rags."<sup>2</sup> His only plea is—"Spare me!" or, with the publican—"God be merciful to me a sinner!"<sup>3</sup>

3. *He casts himself, with a steadfast faith, on the free grace and covenanted mercies of the Lord.*—This is apparent, from Nehemiah's addressing the Lord as *his* God. God is never OUR GOD, till we have become reconciled to him by faith in the appointed sacrifice. The concluding words express this more clearly—"Spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy." It is not some easiness of disposition, making God reluctant to fulfil his threatenings; it is his redeeming love in Christ Jesus, on which alone a guilty sinner must lean. Here only you behold "the greatness of his mercy"—his "unspeakable gift"<sup>4</sup>—his "great salvation."<sup>5</sup> Plead this, and you may then cast away fear. "He that heareth the word" of the Son of God, "and believeth on Him that sent him, hath everlasting life: and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."<sup>6</sup>

If the despised believer may thus appeal from man to God, what hope can there be for those, who compel him so to do?

If the repenting and believing sinner is so graciously "spared," how active should he be in serving the Lord, amid a gainsaying and perverse generation!

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 21.<sup>2</sup> Isa. lxiv. 6.<sup>3</sup> Luke xviii. 13.<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 15.<sup>5</sup> Heb. ii. 3.<sup>6</sup> John v. 24.



## SERMON XXXVI.

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**MATTHEW vi. 6.**—*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

There is nothing so excellent, but our evil hearts will make it the means of sin against God. The case of the Pharisees shews, that even Prayer itself may become abominable in his sight, in consequence of the motives by which it is prompted.—Again, there is nothing so evil in man, but the wisdom of God will turn it to the edification of his true disciples. Thus the hypocrisy of the Pharisees was made the occasion of those most instructive words, which Jesus speaks to us in the text. May his blessing attend our meditations upon them !—We have here,

### I. DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER.

To prevent misapprehension I would observe, that the text must not be regarded as forbidding public worship; which is a duty plainly enjoined in Holy scripture. Even when our Lord accuses the Pharisees of “loving to pray standing in the synagogue,”<sup>1</sup> it is not the regular synagogue-worship which he condemns, but some ostentatious addition made to it by those hypocrites. The directions here given refer wholly

<sup>1</sup> Verse 5.

to Private Prayer : and they may be summed up under three heads.—We are to

1. *Secure to ourselves complete Retirement.* “Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut thy door.”

In this direction, regard the thing intended, rather than the words by which it is expressed. Some of you, perhaps, have not any “closet” to enter, or “door” to shut ; yet the real meaning of our Saviour’s injunction is still applicable, even to you. You must have a time for prayer, when you can be alone—quite alone—secure from any interruption from others. I am aware that this may seem a thing not easy to be managed ; especially by servants, and the children in a large family. But if they will recollect how many sinful things they find means to do in secret, I think they will not dwell very much on this objection. Most of us spend a large a proportion of our time by ourselves, either “sitting in the house,” or “walking by the way.” Can we, at such seasons, find no leisure for secret prayer ? Holy Isaac used the field as his closet ;<sup>1</sup> and, while thus engaged, met with a “blessing from the Lord.”

Important reasons may be given for this direction.—Without retirement for prayer, it will never be certain that you are not desiring to be “seen of men.” Such is the vanity and pride of our minds, that the presence even of a religious friend has its danger ; you may be unconsciously seeking his good opinion, by the length or apparent earnestness of your prayer. — Without retirement, moreover, you can never be so free from distraction of thought as is desirable. The full heart cannot so entirely unburden itself : even your own imaginations are sufficient to disturb and interrupt you ; *how much more* the presence of another person !—

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxiv. 63.

That person, too, may be a mocker; or if not, he also has his own distractions, and they will be communicated in a measure to you.—I do not say that the presence of others is to excuse us from prayer, at those times when prayer is a duty—as for example, on rising from our beds, or before we go to rest at night. At such times to neglect prayer, because our companions will see us, would be to be “ashamed of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> But if on these occasions you cannot be entirely private, you must secure some other time when you may be quite by yourself; otherwise your soul will languish.

2. *Realize the presence of an invisible God.* “Pray to thy Father which is in secret.”

When all else are shut out, God is there still; “in secret”—but *there*. All the actions of prayer imply this; but the heart does not always feel it—never, as it ought to do. Insomuch that when the gracious Father makes his presence felt, many have confessed, with the patriarch Jacob—“Surely the Lord was in this place and I knew it not!”<sup>2</sup> This truth, then, you must strive to know and feel. Retirement is a necessary means for this end; but it will not of itself give you the conviction. You may be thoughtless and trifling when alone, as well as in company. No—you must call on your heart to “see him who is invisible.”<sup>3</sup> I do not mean that you should imagine any appearance of God—this would be a sort of idolatry: but persuade yourself that he is really present, though secret; as much so, as when he shall be seen “coming in the clouds of heaven.”<sup>4</sup> Such a deep persuasion will render your prayer serious—humble—earnest; full of feeling and reality. You will afterwards find that it was no vain service; but that you have “drawn nigh to God,” and God has “drawn nigh to you.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke ix. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxviii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xi. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxiv. 30.

<sup>5</sup> James iv. 8.

3. *Approach him in a childlike spirit.* "Pray to thy Father."

I can imagine that the former directions may have alarmed and intimidated you. But this was not the design of our Saviour. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father!"<sup>1</sup> 'But how is this spirit to be obtained?' Yes—that is the all-important question: and the answer to it brings in the entire gospel of Jesus Christ. As sinners, we may well tremble to come before God, and to shut ourselves up alone with him. But we must not be there alone—we must take Christ with us, as our advocate, mediator, priest, intercessor. Prayer must be made *in his name*; and then God hearkens to him rather than to us.—The truth is, that when a repenting sinner believes in Christ for salvation, he becomes one with Christ, and may then draw nigh as a child of God. He is born again—adopted—reconciled; and, being a son, God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into his heart.<sup>2</sup> And this is what you must covet and seek after. In this filial, reconciled spirit, must your supplications be offered up. You will still feel yourself guilty, unworthy, and vile; but, like a child suffering disease, pain, or trouble, you will come with confident access to the Father of Christ your Lord, for deliverance out of all your distress.

Together with these directions, we have

II. ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER. "Thy Father, which seeth in secret, will reward thee openly."

In these words, you may observe

1. *An Acknowledgment of God's relation to his believing worshippers.* If you come as his children,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 6.

he will accept you as his children. If through Christ you call him Father, he replies to you in the character of a father. Such appears to be the design of that repetition which you find in the text—"Pray to thy Father . . . and thy Father" (it might have been merely "*and he*") "will reward thee openly." And, my brethren, this is the universal way with our heavenly Father, towards all who approach him at his invitation. When we take him at his word, he will be to us as good as his word; on the contrary, when we refuse to believe him, he also becomes cold and reserved towards us. Thus David speaks—"With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward."<sup>1</sup>—Here is, secondly,

2. *An Assurance that he "seeth in secret;"*—yes, and he heareth in secret too. There is no need of human eyes to observe and approve; we are not unseen, though we see not him. No need to fear that we speak to the air, and waste our breath. He sees, when we do not pray; certainly therefore when we do. This assurance should encourage you to pray more and more. None of your words fall to the ground; every sigh that has left your heart—every contrite confession—every earnest desire—the smallest petition—all is seen in secret; it is all treasured in the "book of remembrance."<sup>2</sup> Not a word has been spoken so silently, not a desire has been felt so secretly, but it has found its way to the knowledge of your Father. Believe this, and take courage.—You have, finally,

3. *A promise of clear and undeniable Success.* "He shall reward you openly."—The expression "*reward*" is used in reference to that which the Pharisee sought by his ostentatious prayers. The blessings obtained by true prayer are no otherwise a reward, than as they

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xviii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Mal. iii. 16.

certainly follow it; they are gifts of mere grace—utterly unmerited, however ardently prayed for. Nevertheless, such gracious gifts shall infallibly be bestowed on those, who come unto God by Christ Jesus. And they shall be given “openly”—so as to make you feel assured that your prayer has been heard; so as ultimately to convince others also, that the blessing you enjoy is “the Lord’s work,” and “his doing.” Thus it was, that he openly acknowledged the prayer of Nathanael “under the fig-tree;”<sup>1</sup> and that of Saul of Tarsus when converted.<sup>2</sup> Thus Peter was delivered while the church was in prayer for him;<sup>3</sup> and Daniel was saved by prayer, though condemned to die for praying.<sup>4</sup> Often are such things verified in the believer’s private experience: and hereafter it shall far more openly be seen, “that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availed much.”<sup>5</sup>

Some of you never pray! These directions and encouragements, therefore, are thrown away upon you. Can there be a more awful token against you? Living “without God in the world,” you “have no hope.”<sup>6</sup> Oh repent, before you see him in the clouds, coming to “pour out his fury on them that have not called on his name.”<sup>7</sup>

Some value the privilege. Why then do you not live more fully up to it? Oh try the value of the promise! God has set no limits to his mercy; neither are those merits of Jesus scanty, for the sake of which he admits you to his throne of grace. Again, therefore, I say, Try the value of this promise. Bring all your wants to God in Christ, and see if he will not supply them. “Open thy mouth wide”—for he gives thee every assurance, that he “will fill it.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John i. 48. <sup>2</sup> Acts ix. 11. <sup>3</sup> Acts xii. 5. 12. <sup>4</sup> Dan. vi. 20, 21.  
<sup>5</sup> Jam. v. 16. <sup>6</sup> Eph. ii. 12. <sup>7</sup> Jer. x. 25. <sup>8</sup> Psa. lxxxi. 10.

## SERMON XXXVII.

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PROVERBS xiv. 12.—*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

It is not of gross wickedness, you observe, that the Wise man is here speaking. No one is ignorant, not even the guilty person, that the end of that way is death; nor does open vice ever seem right to a man, though it may seem profitable and pleasant. No—it is a more insidious path, to which my text alludes; a way which is thought right and safe, though it be all the while leading down to death everlasting.

And is there only one such way? Had this been the case, one cannot help thinking that Solomon would have done well to point it out more particularly. His language, however, is not to be taken so strictly. There are now, and doubtless there were in his time, *many* “ways which seemed right”—one to one man, and another to another man; while “the end thereof were the ways of death.” I shall endeavour, by God’s help, to point out a few of them; earnestly praying that you may obtain grace to shun them.

I. THE WAY OF WILFUL IGNORANCE is very commonly thought a harmless one; but its end is death.

In worldly matters we continually see the disadvantage of ignorance, even where no guilt is attached to it. But, in those things which concern our souls, ignorance is not only ruinous, but wicked. And yet how

constantly is it pleaded, especially by unlearned and poor people, as an excuse for neglecting religion: 'I am no scholar—I must leave these matters for wiser heads than mine—God has not given me learning, and he will not require more than he gives.' And so they end the matter—thinking it "right" to continue as ignorant of the way of salvation, as the very beasts that perish!

It will be well, however, for you to consider in what light such ignorance is regarded, by Him who will judge you at the last day. It will not save you from destruction: the sinners before the flood "knew not,"<sup>1</sup> yet they escaped not; the Jews, in the time of Christ, "knew not the day of their visitation,"<sup>2</sup> yet were without excuse. Nay, it may be the very means of your destruction: "My people," saith God, "are destroyed for lack of knowledge."<sup>3</sup> Nay more, ignorance is itself the guilty cause of destruction; for thus you read<sup>4</sup>—"It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour." Do you call this unjust—unreasonable—cruel? Not so, if, as is the case, your ignorance be voluntary. You have the means of knowledge; God has placed within your reach the bible—the pulpit—the throne of grace—the Holy Spirit: and he has given you these, expressly that you might "know the things which belong to your peace," before "they be hid from your eyes." No longer then flatter yourselves with the thought that ignorance is excusable; its end is death—death eternal—death in hell.

## II. THE WAY OF FORMALITY is not less dangerous.

It sometimes happens that, without any real change of heart, persons begin to see that some degree of reli-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiv. 39. <sup>2</sup> Luke xix. 44. <sup>3</sup> Hos. iv. 6. <sup>4</sup> Isa. xxvii. 11.



gion is necessary: and the sort of religion to which they have recourse, is what I here call the way of Formality. It is an outward form and imitation of godliness, without any inward spiritual feeling. It consists of going to church—reading occasionally a few chapters in the bible—going to the Sacrament—and other things of that kind; which are practised, not with any idea of shewing sorrow for sin, or humbling the soul before God, or “feeling after”<sup>1</sup> a Saviour, or beginning a new life. No—the idea is that of getting through a duty, and recommending themselves to God’s favour, and earning a reward. You see people doing this Sunday after Sunday, who still walk on in their wicked ways notwithstanding. And they think that this formality is good—that it is religion—that, at least as far as it goes, it is “right.”

The word of God, however, gives a far different view of the case. “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me:” “in vain do they worship me.”<sup>2</sup> The opening chapter of Isaiah declares that the very services appointed by the Lord became an abomination in his eyes, when done in formality. And remember how certainly he beholds your inmost soul! If a king could see treason in the heart of his courtier, would he value that courtier’s homage? or would he accept a painted crown, when he demanded a golden one? Will the King of kings, then, care at all for your lip service, your bended knee, your form of respect, when he sees that *your* heart is not in it? Professions can never deceive *him*: and therefore this way of formal religion, which to many a man appears right, is but the way to offend God more than ever, and to ensure eternal death.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xv. 8, 9.

III. THE WAY OF DOING ONE'S BEST is another which frequently passes for the right way; yet is equally ruinous.

For I take the words in that sense, which is in most cases their real meaning. Do people mean, by 'doing their best,' loving God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; and their neighbour as themselves? Do they mean—striving against every sin, particularly that which doth most easily beset them? Far from it! 'Doing one's best' sounds very well: but it commonly means doing something less than God requires; for such is the language often used, when men would excuse their neglect of his will and of his word—'I am not perfect, to be sure; but if *I do my best*, I have no fear but *that* will be sufficient.'

Let us inquire, then; Do they, who use this language, really do their best? Are they, in fact, taking any serious steps for the salvation of their souls? Suppose the way were a right one—are they walking in it? Conscience must tell many a man, that he is doing nothing of the kind. In numberless instances, 'I do my best' amounts to little more than 'I shall do nothing at all;' and surely this must end in death!

But let us think again; If men really strove to do their best, would that be the right way—the gospel way of life. No—it may, and it often does, "seem" so; but it is a proud way—a self-righteous way: it stands in direct contradiction to—"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us:"<sup>1</sup> "not of works, lest any man should boast:" "by grace are ye saved, through faith."<sup>2</sup> In fact, it would make man his own saviour: "for if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain."<sup>3</sup>—Let me not, however, be misunderstood.

<sup>1</sup> Titus iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 8, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. ii. 21.

Those who are saved will unquestionably strive, through divine grace, to do their best: but, always conscious that they fall short, they will never trust in any thing that they do. The most holy will still cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Thus they are justified, and all others condemned.

IV. THE WAY OF UNCOVENANTED MERCY appears to others the right one; yet the end of this also is the way of death.

The persons, to whom I now allude, own that they are sinners, deserving of punishment. But they speak peace to themselves, by saying—'God is merciful. Surely he is too good to inflict upon me the everlasting torments!' Thus they talk in health, when we endeavour to rouse their fears of "the wrath to come:" thus they speak on their death-bed—'hoping that the Lord will take them to his mercy.'—Now it is very true, that by mercy alone can we be saved; and that "with the Lord there is mercy, and plenteous redemption."<sup>1</sup> But it is equally true, that there is a particular way in which alone that mercy is offered to sinners. God has never said that he will spare the *unconverted* — the *impenitent* — the *unbelieving* — the *ungodly*. If such be your character, you are "without Christ:" and then, all your reliance on God's mercy is but leaning on a broken reed; which will ere long give way, and let you drop into woe eternal.

V. THE WAY OF GOOD INTENTIONS is the last that I shall name. It seems right; but it often ends in "the ways of death."

A man may appear to escape all the other dangerous paths, and yet finally perish in this. On every other

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxxx. 7.

point the faithful preacher and he are agreed : and at length he resolves—yes, he resolves to seek God ; and that, too, in God's own way, by true repentance, by faith in Christ, and by a life of holy obedience. But alas ! having attained thus far, he begins to look on himself with satisfaction, as if his work was more than half done. He intends to begin soon, very soon ; to-morrow—or as soon as some particular hindrances are removed. Nay, he kneels down in his closet, after some awakening sermon, and vows that he will begin to be religious directly. And all these intentions, promises, and resolutions prove his ruin !—not because they are, in themselves, wrong ; not merely because they remain unfulfilled ; but because they delude him with the idea that he is doing something toward his salvation, when he is actually doing nothing at all. Ah, brethren, is it not the case with some of you ? Oh that I could awaken you from your fatal slumber, and make you see that the very path, which you think to be a right path, may itself be conducting your steps down to the pit of misery. Well was it said by an old Christian writer—‘ Hell is paved with good intentions !’

Remember, in conclusion, that there is a way which to many seemeth wrong, and yet the end thereof is the only way of life. Saul the Pharisee persecuted it<sup>1</sup>—at Ephesus there was no small stir about it<sup>2</sup>—the Jews spake evil of it.<sup>3</sup>—It is the way of faith in Jesus ; opening the eyes—saving freely—transforming the soul. It is the way of holiness ; in which the Spirit of Christ is the Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter. Will you not seek after it ? will you not cry, with David, “ O God, lead me in the way everlasting ?”

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxii. 4.<sup>2</sup> Acts xix. 23.<sup>3</sup> Acts xix. 9.

## SERMON XXXVIII.

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REVELATION iii. 20.—*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

NOTHING can equal the condescending grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! It appears in every part of his dealings with sinners. We have a specimen of it in my text. Here was a set of people calling themselves Christians—and thinking that they were very good Christians too—whom the Lord informs, that their character was utterly loathsome to him. And what then would you expect to be the conclusion of his message, but a sentence of final rejection? Yet it is not so. This glorious Being is found waiting at their door, to give them further tokens of condescending kindness! And such is still his conduct towards a wicked and thoughtless world. There is not one among you, to whom he is not saying—“Behold, I stand at the door and knock!”

From these words, I shall endeavour to shew you,

I. THAT, IN THE DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL, CHRIST IS THE UNINVITED GUEST, PLEADING FOR ADMISSION.

In the case of the Laodiceans it is evident, that his presence had not been sought for. They were saying, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” No need, even of Christ!

but he came, nevertheless. He came, indeed, with a rod—"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten:" but that was only to gain attention to his words of grace—"If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in."

It has ever been thus, my brethren. Whatever acquaintance any of us may have with Jesus, the acquaintance began on his side: by him are the first overtures invariably made.—Let me give you some proofs of this.

1. *The written Gospel* is a proof of it.—When the Son of God offered himself up on the Cross, as an atoning Sacrifice for human sins, a deed was done which filled the heavenly hosts with astonishment. "Angels desired to look into" it.<sup>1</sup> And surely man, the most interested party, might be expected to pay a most inquisitive and anxious attention. But—no such thing! Christ was "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness."<sup>2</sup> Had not some means been adopted for perpetuating the story, it would by this time have been forgotten. Christ therefore sent forth his written Gospel: "these things were written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ."<sup>3</sup> So long as that book is in your hand, he "stands at the door and knocks," asking admission into your hearts.

2. *The Christian Ministry* is another proof.—Few, in those days, could read—some, even among us, cannot read—the written Gospel. Yet neither by them, nor by us, would any remedy have been sought for this defect. Here again, Christ furnishes the remedy. From the beginning he chose certain Ministers, to preach his Gospel—to proclaim the glad tidings. They have a twofold message: for their commission is, *first*, "Cry

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23.

<sup>3</sup> John xx. 31.

aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins;"<sup>1</sup> *secondly*, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."<sup>2</sup> It is added—"He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me."<sup>3</sup> Therefore it is "as though God did beseech you," when "we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God."<sup>4</sup> Invisibly—yet really—he is at this moment standing at your door, an unbidden, unsought Guest.

3. *The Strivings of his Spirit* are another instance of this.—In the two former cases, his approach can more easily be avoided. But what think you of those burning thoughts that sometimes come into your mind; thoughts of Heaven, with an anxious wish that you were sure of going there—thoughts of Hell, with a guilty foreboding that it may become your portion—thoughts of Repentance, with a solemn conviction that you are lost without it—thoughts of Pardon, with doubts whether it be within reach, after all the evil that you have done? Whence these thoughts? Did you seek for them? Did you take pains to encourage them? Nay, have you not resisted them, as so many unwelcome intruders? Now I tell you, that all such thoughts are the voice of an unseen friend, the Spirit of Christ. By them, he is probably just now knocking at your door. Before you expected or desired it, he is speaking to your conscience. This indeed is no proof that you will certainly become religious—much less, that you are already such; but it is full proof that Christ is the first Mover in the work of your salvation, if ever you be saved. Before you knock at mercy's gate, he asks admittance into your heart.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lviii. 1.    <sup>2</sup> Is. xl. 1.    <sup>3</sup> Luke x. 16.    <sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

And how often has he done this ! And in how many ways does he vary the knocking ! Sometimes it is the stroke of affliction—sometimes, a worldly disappointment—sometimes, a startling transgression into which he suffers you to fall : at other times, it is some special providential mercy, some unexpected deliverance, some gracious drawing of the heart towards himself as the Fountain of bliss. Manifold are the ways in which he strikes in with his Word, his Minister, his Spirit : but in all, he comes unsought ; a self-invited friend and Saviour. Oh that you had the wisdom to observe his presence, and admit him to your inmost souls !—For there is a second point clearly proved by my text, namely—

II. THAT CONSENT ALONE IS REQUIRED, ON OUR PART, TO GIVE US A FULL PARTICIPATION IN HIS FRIENDSHIP. “ If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”—Observe here

1. *The Consent which is required.*

We must “ hear the voice ” of Christ.—Many hear the knocking, who never, alas ! perceive His voice. Such is his goodness, that none of us are left without the outward call. You all have the written Word—the speaking Minister—the striving Spirit. You have mercies too, and chastisements. But few discover Christ in all these things. They say with the Philistines—“ It was a chance that happened to us ! ”<sup>1</sup>—Ah ! brethren, what can the means of grace avail you, without an attentive use of them ?—And when the Visitor is Christ too ! Say not that you are weary of his knocking—that you have other sounds to regard. It is your Creator, your Redeemer,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel vi. 9.



your Lord, who knocks ! Rather shut your ear to every other voice ; be deaf to all the proposals, pleasures, and pretences of this false and wicked world, that you may give your whole undivided attention to the meek and lowly Jesus. Whoever else speaks, listen to HIM : say—"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."<sup>1</sup>

We must also "open the door." This is the turning point in that consent which he requires. Many know, well enough, that it is Christ who knocks : but instead of admitting him, they stand parleying, and hesitating, till at last he goes away in high displeasure. And I can tell you the reason of this hesitation. They do not like his company—for he comes to humble, as well as to save them. They do not value his blessings—for they think they have no need of them. They have also traitors in the house, who must be turned out, if Christ be admitted ; lusts, follies, prejudices—in short, "the flesh" with all its sinful "affections."<sup>2</sup> But will you on this account resolve not to consent ? not to open your heart to Christ ? Remember ! all these are *your* enemies, as much—nay more than they are his. And he does not impose on *you* the task of expelling them : he comes to do it for you—to "save you from your sins"<sup>3</sup>—to make you his servant, his friend, his child ; for all which, he asks only a willing heart. Whosoever thou mayest be ; whatever the amount of thy past iniquities ; it is thy Saviour who saith it—"IF ANY MAN hear my voice and open the door, I will come in."—Observe now,

2. *The Friendship which is offered.*

"I will come in to him, and will sup with him."—A vast condescension, truly, for the Lord of hosts, "the Prince of the kings of the earth," to visit a sinful

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. iii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. v. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. i. 21.

outcast, and to accept of such entertainment as he may be able to provide ! Who, that knows his own vileness, can refrain from crying out—" And will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth ? " But what is it that he thus deigns to accept ? A broken heart—a sorrowful sighing—a contrite prayer—a trembling reliance—a breath of praise : " for in these things," saith he, " I delight." Well—these we can set before him ; and, worthless as they are, he will accept them. Yet what is this but " raising up the poor out of the dust, and lifting up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory ? " <sup>1</sup>—Again,

" He " shall sup " with me." It is a supper of that kind, at which the Guest furnishes the most valuable part of the banquet.—Christ, then, brings with him Pardon, Peace, Purity, Gladness, Joy. His own flesh is the meat ; his own blood is the drink : in short, He is himself the feast. Giving himself, he can give nothing more ; and more we cannot need. In the benefits of his salvation, and the comforts of intercourse with him, we have every thing that poor guilty sinners can possibly require.

Have you, dear brethren, closed with this unsolicited offer of friendship, on the part of your Almighty Redeemer ? Tremble at that word *Almighty*, if you have not : for though you may shut out his love, yet " his hand will find out those that hate him." <sup>2</sup>—But does your proud heart relent ? Hasten, then, to open to the Visitor, who has waited so long at your door. " Kiss the Son, lest he be angry." <sup>3</sup> " Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 8.    <sup>2</sup> Psalm xxi. 8.    <sup>3</sup> Psalm ii. 12.    <sup>4</sup> Job xxii. 21.

## SERMON XXXIX.

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1 SAMUEL ii. 9.—*He will keep the feet of his Saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.*

THESE words occur near the end of a song of thanksgiving, composed by Hannah, the pious mother of the prophet Samuel. The occasion of it was a remarkable answer which she had received from the Lord, to her petition that she might have a son. Full of gratitude to the divine Hearer of prayer, she brings her child to the tabernacle, and there devotes him to the service of God; expressing her thankful joy, in the verses connected with my text.

The language of this song, however, may be thought somewhat extravagant, if this be the whole explanation of its design. But more is meant than at first sight appears. Beyond her own intention, probably, Hannah is led by the Spirit of prophecy to use expressions adapted to a more glorious event than the birth of Samuel—namely, the future birth of the great Prophet and Priest, Jesus the Messiah. The triumphs here celebrated, therefore, are not those of an obscure pious matron over her rival, but of the Son of God over all his foes, whether they be on earth below, or in hell beneath. Hence you will find a remarkable similarity between this ancient hymn, and the song of Mary the mother of Jesus; the subject in both cases being in reality the same.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Luke i. 46—55.

It is with reference to Christ, then, that we read in my text—"He will keep the feet of his Saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail."—These words describe

# I. THE SECURITY OF THE SAINTS OF GOD.

1. The title, *Saints*, although used by a profane world as a term of contempt, is of all names the most honourable. It literally signifies the *Holy Ones*. And must not that be indeed an honourable title, which associates the servant of God with his Maker, "whose name is Holy?"<sup>1</sup> with his Redeemer, "the Holy One of Israel?"<sup>2</sup> and with "the Holy Ghost?"—not to mention those holy angels, who veil their faces before his throne. In a case like this, the humble Christian may well disregard the sneer of those who scoff at all holiness, and rest satisfied with the smile of his heavenly Friend. Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God; let me be reviled as one of thy Saints, if only thou 'make me to be numbered with them, in glory everlasting.'—If, indeed, hypocrites lay claim to the title, let them be exposed as they deserve; nevertheless "take heed lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye pluck up also the wheat with them."<sup>3</sup>

A true Saint is one who, being "convinced of sin," is looking to God's mercy in Christ Jesus for pardon and deliverance from it. The Holy Ghost, while enabling him to rely on Gospel promises, has given him at the same time a love to Gospel holiness. Its fruits are, repentance—mortification of sin—resolutions and plans of obedience—joy in God's service—and sorrow at the remaining corruption of his heart. A Saint may indeed commit iniquity, and a sinner do the very same; yet the difference between them is infinite.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lvii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xli. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xiii. 29.

The Saint abhors and loathes himself, and, through grace, quickly rises out of the snare: the sinner is in his own element; he chuses it—loves it—remains in it.—They are, moreover, “*His saints* ;” for it is the Lord’s doing, if any be enabled to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world.”<sup>1</sup>—Who among you, brethren, have been thus “plucked as brands out of the fire !”<sup>2</sup> Let those reply, who mourn over themselves as unholy; for they alone are the true Saints of the Lord.

2. The *Security* of all such is here declared: “He will keep the feet of his Saints.”

It is a security from *outward distress*.—Such was the use made of a similar expression by Satan, when he would have tempted our Lord to presumption, by quoting the Psalmist’s words—“He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”<sup>3</sup> Our Lord, though he repelled the temptation, did not object to this application of the Psalmist’s language: for it is undeniably true, that the Saints of God are under the protection of angels<sup>4</sup>—that their “hairs are numbered”<sup>5</sup>—that their “death is precious in the sight of the Lord”<sup>6</sup>—in short, that “all things work together for their good.”<sup>7</sup> The form of trouble, indeed, they must needs pass through; but their “steps shall not slide.” Like the three children, they may enter the fiery furnace: but God will check the fury of the flames, and the Son of God will be with them in the fire, and in due time conduct them from it.<sup>8</sup>—But

It is a security from *spiritual evil*, which forms their greatest privilege. Of this it is, that David chiefly

<sup>1</sup> Tit. ii. 12. Gal. i. 4. <sup>2</sup> Zech. iii. 2. <sup>3</sup> Matt. iv. 6. <sup>4</sup> Heb. i. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Luke xii. 7. <sup>6</sup> Ps. cxvi. 15. <sup>7</sup> Rom. viii. 28. <sup>8</sup> See Dan. iii.

sings, in the twenty-third Psalm. "The good Shepherd," having guided their feet into the way of peace, engages to keep them in that way, so that "they shall never perish."<sup>1</sup> If they wander from the fold, then—"he restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake." "When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up."<sup>2</sup> Oh what consolation must this assurance yield to those who know the malice of Satan—the snares of the world—the perverseness and deceit of their own heart! "Trust in the Lord," therefore, O ye saints of his, "with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding: in all your ways"—whether you be troubled 'in mind, body, or estate'—"acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths."<sup>3</sup> "He will keep the feet" of his holy servants in Christ Jesus!

These words describe, secondly,

II. THE CERTAIN RUIN OF THE WICKED. They "shall be silent in darkness." Let us consider, first, the persons—then, the portion prepared for them.

1. The *Persons* here intended, are manifestly all such as do not come under the former description of "Saints." And, were it necessary for us to name each individual of this class, methinks our labour would be considerably lightened, even by the confession which they themselves are forward enough to make. 'I am no Saint!' is the general cry; and certainly they who so dread the very name, declare plainly that they are destitute of the character which it expresses. But, my friends, whatever profession you may make, whatever name you may choose to bear, this one thing at least is certain: if you be not holy, you are wicked; if you be not under the influence of God's Spirit, you

<sup>1</sup> John x. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xciv. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. iii. 5, 6.

are under that of Satan ; if you be not, through faith in Christ, a friend of God, you are one of those “adversaries of the Lord,” of whom it is said in the next verse, that “they shall be broken in pieces”—and, in my text, “They shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.”

2. *Awful Portion!* “They shall be silent!” Here on earth, the wicked have a great deal to say for themselves, and are indeed the principal talkers ; but in the world to come, all their present high language will be mute as death. “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?”<sup>1</sup> You shall know who he is, and never ask that question more.—Here “the fool saith in his heart,” and his lips sometimes dare to utter the blasphemy—“There is no God!” Such a word will never be spoken there.—“It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we keep his ordinance?”<sup>2</sup> You will not need to ask the question, when you see “Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom.”—Yes, my friends! in that world, all vain excuses for impenitence, all proud reasonings against the Gospel, all false pretences to a religious character, all objections against the strict and holy Law, shall be silenced at once and for ever. “Our God,” so long mocked, “shall come, and shall not keep silence . . . and the heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God is Judge himself.”<sup>3</sup> Behold, he cometh with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute judgement upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them . . . of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, they shall be silent “in darkness.” And what is darkness? It is the absence of light—of comfort—of hope—of all possibility of deliverance. It is such a darkness as that of the Egyptians, “darkness

<sup>1</sup> Exodus v. 2. <sup>2</sup> Mal. iii. 14. <sup>3</sup> Psalm l. 3—6. <sup>4</sup> Jude 14, 15.

which might be felt : ” but with this difference ; that continued but for three days<sup>1</sup>—this is “ the blackness of darkness for ever ; ”<sup>2</sup> from that, Pharaoh was delivered by a momentary relenting of his proud heart—from this, the sincerest repentance, the most sorrowful tears, the most importunate prayer, will never procure the smallest relief.

Does any wicked man laugh in his heart at these denunciations, saying, ‘ I care not ! I will have my own way, and dare the worst ! ’ Then let me ask him, what “ strength ” he has prepared for a contest with the Almighty ? For let him note the last words of the text—“ By strength shall no man prevail.” How should he indeed ? Did the wicked antediluvians prevail ? or the builders of Babel ? or Pharaoh ? or the Canaanites ? or Sennacherib ? or Nebuchadnezzar ? Surely I need not urge this question further.

Let me rather, in conclusion, hint at the means by which you may now prevail with God, ere that inevitable ruin overtake you.—Be strong, then,

*In Weakness ;* in submission—in renunciation of your own righteousness, strength, and goodness. Remember the Publican in the temple !<sup>3</sup> Imitate his example, and hope for his success.—Be strong, further,

*In God’s own Strength*—that is, in Christ ; who is the “ power of God, and the wisdom of God.” Flee to him, in faith, as your only Refuge. Trust in his all-atoning sacrifice : plead his infinite merits : ask for his converting and sanctifying grace. So shall “ mercy and truth ” be with you ; and certain ruin shall be exchanged for everlasting security, holiness, and joy.

<sup>1</sup> Exodus x. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Jude 13.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xviii. 13, 14.



## SERMON XL.

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ISAIAH lvii. 19.—*I create the fruit of the lips,  
“Peace, peace, to him that is afar off, and to him  
that is near,” saith the Lord; and I will heal him.*

THESE words contain a gracious declaration, which the Lord himself makes, for the encouragement of contrite mourners. He had been speaking of them in the preceding verses; and he now assures them, that He is the author of that cheering proclamation which would shortly be heard, when the preachers of the Gospel should open their lips, crying, “Peace, peace!” to a world of condemned rebels. “I create that fruit of the lips”—that message of mercy—those “glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to you and to all people;” “I the Lord have spoken it.”

These words set before us

I. THE GRAND SUBJECT OF THE GOSPEL PROCLAMATION: “Peace, peace! saith the Lord.”

What is implied, my brethren, in this expressive word, on which the Gospel herald seems to dwell with so much pleasure?—It implies a state of previous enmity and quarrel: it implies a state of alarm and disquietude: and a remedy for both.

1. And does not the message of the Gospel find us in a state of Enmity? Yea, verily; we are not only “by nature children of wrath,”<sup>1</sup> but by voluntary choice we have rebelled against our God. We are

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 3.

his "enemies by wicked works;"<sup>1</sup> intent on pursuing our own pleasure, and setting at nought his holy will and commandments. You ought to see this, not merely in those startling crimes which are committed by lawless men, but in the whole bent of the carnal and worldly mind; we all forget God—we "love and serve the creature rather than the Creator."<sup>2</sup> And what must needs follow? what, but that God should become *our* Enemy? For sin is that "abomination to the Lord, which he hateth;" and therefore woe to the wretched being that has dared to commit it! In which condition you and I, brethren, are both placed. Happy, if we did but seriously consider it! Weigh, then, the heinousness of your guilt—the terror of almighty anger—the certainty of divine threatenings. Then hear the Gospel proclaim, "Peace, peace!" A method has been found for reconciling these enemies. The "Prince of peace"<sup>3</sup> descends from heaven: Angels sing "Peace on earth"<sup>4</sup>: Jesus makes it his special bequest<sup>5</sup>—and forthwith yields his own life as the price of it, "making peace through the blood of his cross."<sup>6</sup> Harken to this, ye guilty rebels against the King of Heaven! Christ "is your peace." "God was in him reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." On this proclamation, you are invited humbly to come in, and accept the offered grace. "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God."<sup>7</sup>

2. But, further, does not the Gospel find us also in a *state of Alarm and disquietude*? Assuredly it does—though many know not the real cause of their uneasiness, and endeavour to soothe it by worldly cares and pleasures. All such endeavours are vain. Nothing

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 21.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 25.    <sup>3</sup> Isa. ix. 6.    <sup>4</sup> Luke ii. 14.

<sup>5</sup> John xiv. 27.    <sup>6</sup> Col. i. 20.    <sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

can be more true, than the words which follow my text—"The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." And then, when a man's eyes begin to be opened to the real state of the case between God and his soul, even the semblance of peace, with that man, is at an end. The lash of an awakened conscience produces wounds, far beyond the reach of any human skill to heal or alleviate them. But then it is, that the Gospel proclamation is for the first time seen to be really "glad tidings." For such a soul peace is provided. "Come unto me," saith the Saviour, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."<sup>1</sup> How? By enabling the self-condemned to rely on Jesus; and to trust his all-sufficient merits. For, however distracted by guilt the soul may be; if it can but cast itself all on him, who "bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows,"<sup>2</sup> it shall at once have peace:—that is, not only "peace *with* God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"<sup>3</sup> (which might be the case, even while the mourning penitent was ignorant of his blessedness—) but also "the peace *of* God, which passeth all understanding, keeping his heart and mind through Christ Jesus."<sup>4</sup>—Such is the blessing proclaimed to you by the Gospel—"Peace, peace!" And for that the word is doubled unto you twice, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will surely bring it to pass.<sup>5</sup>

Observe now, in this Gospel proclamation,

II. THE UNLIMITED OFFER OF ITS BENEFITS.  
 "To him that is afar off, and to him that is near,  
 Peace, peace, saith the Lord."

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. liii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. v. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. iv. 7.

<sup>5</sup> See Gen. xli. 32.

*In respect of outward privileges*, the Jewish church was "near," and all other nations were "far off." This distinction was of Divine appointment. But it was not intended to be perpetual: for when the Gospel came, this very text was applied by St. Paul, in order to satisfy the Gentile Christians at Ephesus, that they were (equally with the Jews) entitled to all its benefits. "Once," saith he, "ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel;" "but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." He "hath made both one, having broken down the middle wall of partition between us; . . . and came and preached peace, to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."<sup>1</sup>—Again,

*In respect of moral character*, some may be thought nearer to God, and some further off; and still no difference is made. To each, peace through Christ is offered on the same terms, as a most unmerited gift; with equal cordiality, as by the common Father and Creator of all; and with equal certainty of a blessing—as purchased by a price which, while indispensable for the redemption of the holiest, was sufficient for that of the guiltiest transgressor.

*In respect of inward experience*, again, some may feel discouraged by the idea, that others have greater nearness to God than themselves. Thus the publican, it is probable, envied the Pharisee, whom he beheld worshipping in the Temple; while it seemed more becoming for himself to stand afar off, and not even with his eyes to approach the glorious mercy-seat of heaven.<sup>2</sup> Poor downcast penitent! he little thought what peace was preparing, even for him. Now it is to characters of the same description, that the procla-

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 11—18.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xviii. 13, 14.

mation in my text is made. For observe how it is introduced :<sup>1</sup> "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of an humble and contrite spirit." "I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners." And then follow the words of the text—"I create the fruit of the lips ; Peace, peace, to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord ; and I will heal him."—Once more,

*In respect of local distance*, God is still "no respecter of persons." He orders that his Gospel be "preached in all the world," "to all nations,"<sup>2</sup> and to "every creature ;"<sup>3</sup> he requires that those who already enjoy its peace should send forward the glad tidings to those who have it not. And this is our warrant for the labours and designs of Missionary and Bible Societies. Christ offers peace "to them that are afar off," as well as "to them that are near ;" and his servants must do the same. Had not this been done by former Christians, where were we now ? "Sitting in darkness and the shadow of death !" utterly defrauded of all the benefits, procured by the Atonement of the world's Redeemer !

But let us notice, in the third place,

III. THE HOLY CHANGE, INVARIABLY CONNECTED WITH THE RECEPTION OF THEM. "I will heal him."

Sin, my brethren, must not be regarded merely as an act—or a number of acts—by which we have forfeited the favour of God, and made him our enemy. It is also a violent and inveterate disease, which

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 15, &c.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19.    <sup>3</sup> Mark xvi. 15.

corrupts the whole man ; which, even when pardoned , will shew itself again and again, in fresh acts, words, desires, and imaginations of evil. Now many a man has endeavoured to cure this disease, by strong resolutions, by watchfulness, by mortification. These, I grant, are all very needful, and our bounden duty ; but they will be of no avail by themselves. As well might you expect the Ethiopian to change his own skin, or the leopard his spots. No—a divine Healer is wanted, to effect this cure. Accordingly, it is here made the subject of a promise. The same Lord, who offers peace, promises holiness—" I will heal him." Most bodily cures, however, are gradual ; so is that of the soul's disease. Yet the Physician is wise, experienced, kind, faithful ; he will leave no work which he undertakes, unfinished ; we may therefore safely put our souls under his care and keeping, for him to cleanse and sanctify them by his Holy Spirit.

Observe, finally, the order of the Gospel blessings. Holiness is not the cause of a sinner's reconciliation to God, but the consequence of it. Thy first task, O guilty soul, is to go to the " fountain opened for sin and uncleanness." <sup>1</sup> As it concerns thy peace with God, Christ is all that thou hast to trust to ; and from him must come that free grace, which shall make thee a " child of light." <sup>2</sup> This—and not thy own amendment or holiness—is to recommend thee to God. But, when thou hast obtained this by simple faith, then God will put his Spirit into thy heart, to sanctify and heal it. Thou art thus admitted into his hospital ; and by degrees the image of God will be restored, by Him who never yet discharged a single patient incurable.

<sup>1</sup> Zech. xiii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xvi. 8.

## SERMON XLI.

---

2 KINGS x. 15.—*Is thine heart right?*

THESE were the proud words of one, who little knew what was in his own heart. But they contain an enquiry, of no small importance to every fallen child of Adam. May I be enabled so to expound it, that we may all become savingly acquainted with our own real character in the sight of God!

Let me ask, then,

“Is thine heart right,”

I. IN ITS VIEWS OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH? Has it formed a right judgment concerning thy natural condition, as a sinner against God; and respecting the way of bettering that condition?

I am aware that many regard this as the proper business of the understanding, rather than of the heart. Hence they excuse their erroneous views in religion, by pleading want of ability to discover the truth. Hence the poor think it enough to say, ‘I am no scholar!’ and persons, far wiser than they in worldly wisdom, have pretended, ‘that a man is not responsible for what he believes, and that it is not his fault if he be mistaken.’ But the Scripture gives a very different account of the matter. A right faith is there represented as having more to do with the heart than with the head. Men are ignorant of God, simply because “they do not like to retain him in their knowledge.”<sup>1</sup> On the one hand we are informed, that

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 28.

“with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;”<sup>1</sup> on the other, unbelief is ascribed to an evil heart—if men “depart from the living God,” it is owing to “an evil heart of unbelief.”<sup>2</sup>

All this is easily explained. The Gospel is designed to humble us : Reason sees at once the fitness of such a design—but the proud heart of course opposes, and therefore *will* not believe. The Gospel makes known a salvation of God’s devising : Reason might at once confess the right he has to do so—but the proud heart again stands in the way. The Gospel, in short, requires man to look on himself as nothing, and upon God as every thing : and what can be more evident than the propriety of this ? but the whole scheme is resisted by “the carnal mind,” which is “enmity against God.” Hence, and hence alone, all those mistakes in religion, into which different persons fall. They are not accidental—not unavoidable ; but the perverse, self-willed, and guilty errors of men, who “love darkness rather than light,” and therefore will not be taught of God.

How is *your* heart, then, towards Divine truth ? “Surely it is meet to be said unto God—That which I see not, teach thou me!”<sup>3</sup> Does your heart say ‘Amen’ to this ? Are you willing to learn ? willing to be cast down and abased ? willing that God should have the entire saving of you ? content to stand as a beggar at the footstool of mercy ? and, while you desire nothing less than “a crown of glory,” convinced that you are undeserving even of “crumbs from the Master’s table ?” All these are matters of feeling rather than of opinion ; and they are indispensable to a right state of heart.

“Is thine heart right,” secondly,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 10.    <sup>2</sup> Heb. iii. 12.    <sup>3</sup> Job xxxiv. 31, 32.



**II. IN ITS DEPENDANCE?** On what is it actually resting, as the ground of its hopes for Eternity ?

“Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup> If you have adopted right views of religious truth, you will at once agree with this declaration ; confessing that Christ’s merits alone can recommend you to God’s favour—and that the Spirit of Christ alone can make you holy, and obedient to God’s commandments. All this, however, you may readily acknowledge as the true doctrine, while (such is the deceitfulness of the heart) you may actually be “building on the sand” of self-righteousness and self-dependance. The lips are often right, while the heart is wrong. How is *your* heart ? Has it fled—is it daily and hourly fleeing—to Christ, for “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ?”<sup>2</sup> That is the sinner’s first step—and he must continually be taking it afresh. As often as the Law condemns, as the conscience upbraids, as the flesh rebels, as Satan tempts, so often must we look, and that again and again, to Christ. No improvement which we may discover in our own character, must be put in the place of his atoning blood : no effort against sin must be made, but with an express regard to his Spirit, as alone able to make it effectual. What then is your experience in these particulars ? Is your heart right—that is, not only persuaded that Christ “is able to save to the uttermost,”<sup>3</sup> but practically depending on him, for the beginning, the continuance, and the final completing of your salvation ?

“Is thine heart right,” again,

**III. IN ITS CHOICE ?** In what does it delight ? what does it esteem to be the chief good ?

Many are driven to something like dependance on

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. vii. 25.

Christ, by the terrors of God's wrath, and the fear of damnation : but they still feel no love for God and his ways ; they would rather, if that were possible, continue to enjoy the world while they live, and then not be sent to hell when they die. Their choice of Christ, such as it is, is no better than a choice between two evils ; religion is not so bad as damnation—but they have little love for it on its own account. But now hear, on the contrary, the language of David—of one whom the Lord calls “ a man after his own heart :”<sup>1</sup> “ Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”<sup>2</sup> Can your heart be right, if it has no feelings like these—no deliberate choice of God, as its friend, its portion, its heaven ? Again—hear St. Paul : “ What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ ; yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”<sup>3</sup> Again—hear St. Peter : “ Whom not having seen ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”<sup>4</sup> They who speak such things declare plainly, that their affections are fixed on something very different from worldly profit, honour, or pleasure ; and these were the men whose hearts were right. Are yours right, then ?

“ Is thine heart right,” fourthly,

IV. IN ITS INTENTIONS AND PURPOSES? Having discovered the Truth—rested on Christ—chosen the Lord for your welcome portion—what is now your object in life ?

Christians of old, when they were admitted to that

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xiii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. iii. 7, 8.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter i. 8.

honourable name, determined to "live henceforth not unto themselves, but to him which died for them and rose again."<sup>1</sup> They considered themselves as no longer their own property, but his who had bought them with his blood; and "whatsoever they did"—even in the commonest matters, such as eating and drinking—all was to be done "to the glory of God."<sup>2</sup> Now has *your* heart come to this resolution? Is God's honour dear to you? his written word the map by which you intend to guide all your steps? I speak not now, of the success which you may have attained, but of the design which you ought to have formed. And I ask whether your heart can possibly be right, if you be not seriously taking measures for devoting your whole self—"spirit, soul, and body"<sup>3</sup>—to the service of Christ your Lord?

"Is thine heart right," once more,

#### V. IN ITS ACTUAL INFLUENCE ON THY CONDUCT?

Many, alas! woefully deceive themselves, by forming excellent resolutions—never to be put in practice. In such a case, let self-flattery pretend what it may, the heart must be wrong.

All conduct is necessarily the effect of inclination; it is therefore the *test* of inclination—that is, of the state of the heart. Hence when Simon offered the Apostles money, that he might obtain the power of giving the Holy Ghost by laying on of hands, St. Peter justly inferred from this wicked proposal, that Simon's "heart was not right in the sight of God."<sup>4</sup>—Do you conceive that your heart is right? How then does it influence your life—your conversation—employments—temper—actions? Can men perceive in these things, that "God is in you of a truth?"<sup>5</sup> that

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 15.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. x. 31.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. v. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Acts viii. 21.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

“old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new?”<sup>1</sup> that you are “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile?”<sup>2</sup> To prove this, we do not look for perfection; but we have a right to expect consistency. Either you are “growing in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;”<sup>3</sup> or you are mourning over your negligence, “remembering from whence you have fallen,” and striving to “repent and do the first works.”<sup>4</sup> As for outward gross sin—habitual neglect of the means of grace—familiarity with the ungodly—these cannot be, where the heart is right. ‘Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord.’

If the heart be not right, nothing else is right. Even the better parts of your conduct, for want of this, will still be offensive in the sight of that God, who “seeth not as man seeth.”

If you be conscious that your heart is not right, then remember that “God is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things.”<sup>5</sup> It may be safe from human scrutiny—but not from his eye. And, moreover, “God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”<sup>6</sup>

If you would have your heart set right, bring it to God in faith and prayer: he will give you a “new” one—a “clean” one—a “perfect” one. Yea, he will himself “dwell in you, and walk in you:” he will say—“It is my people!” and you shall say—“The Lord is my God!”

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.<sup>2</sup> John i. 47.<sup>3</sup> 2 Peter iii. 18.<sup>4</sup> Rev. ii. 5.<sup>5</sup> 1 John iii. 20.<sup>6</sup> Ecc. xii. 14.

## SERMON XLII.

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LUKE XV. 2.—*This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*

THE chapter opens with these words—"Then drew near all the Publicans and sinners for to hear" Jesus. It was a sight which filled Angels with joy and gladness. Other eyes, however, witnessed it with very different feelings: Satan beheld his kingdom in danger—and his children shewed their relation to him, by contempt and murmurs; "the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them!"

Words, nevertheless, have sometimes been spoken, so as to contain a valuable meaning which was never intended by the speakers; and much instruction may be gained, by noticing coincidences of this kind. St. John mentions a remarkable instance. Caiaphas, the High Priest, in his eagerness to urge forward the destruction of Jesus, had exclaimed among his hesitating fellow-counsellors, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not:" upon which St. John remarks—"This spake he not of himself, but, being High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation."<sup>1</sup>—My text is an example of the same kind: it is capable

<sup>1</sup> John xi. 49—52.

of two different meanings ; one of which is utterly false—the other is a most valuable and glorious Truth.

I. THE WORDS, AS THEY WERE INTENDED, CONTAIN A FALSE AND MALICIOUS CALUMNY.

“This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” The fact itself was undeniable : but what interpretation did the Pharisees wish to put upon it ?

1. They meant to insinuate, *that the followers of Jesus consisted chiefly of worthless and disreputable characters* ; and this was false. It is true, he did not exclude from his instruction any who were desirous of receiving it. It is true also, that multitudes of the very refuse of society did come to hear his words—to behold his miracles—to be healed of their diseases. But there were converts of a higher rank, sufficiently numerous to secure our Saviour against any reasonable contempt on this account. At one time a Nobleman<sup>1</sup>—then a Centurion<sup>2</sup>—afterwards a Ruler of the synagogue<sup>3</sup>—applied for his healing power, and became believers in his doctrine. Among the chief rulers, he had one friend in Nicodemus,<sup>4</sup> another in Joseph of Arimathea :<sup>5</sup> nay, there were “*many*”<sup>6</sup> of this class who “believed on him ;” it was only “because of the Pharisees” that “they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.”

2. These murmurers meant to insinuate, further, *that Jesus loved the company of sinners for its own sake* ; and this again was false. Had there been the slightest evidence of his taking pleasure in bad company, they would have had no difficulty in procuring it, and certainly no unwillingness to produce it. But on this head he repeatedly dared them to the proof : “Which

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 46—53.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. viii. 5—13.

<sup>3</sup> Luke viii. 41—56.

<sup>4</sup> John vii. 50, 51.

<sup>5</sup> Mark xv. 43.

<sup>6</sup> John xii. 42.

of you convinceth me of sin?"<sup>1</sup> Even at that most critical period of his trial, when a single fact of this kind would, if produced, have totally changed the character of the whole transaction, they could bring forward nothing better than the absurd blunder about his destroying the Temple, to rebuild it in three days!

3. Or, perhaps, they meant to insinuate, *that those whom he favourably received continued sinners still*; and this was as false as the rest. The contrary was notoriously true. Did not Levi forsake his iniquitous gain, to follow Christ?<sup>2</sup> Did not Zaccheus give to the poor one "half of his goods," and also "restore fourfold" in every case where he had defrauded "any man by false accusation?"<sup>3</sup> If the "woman that was a sinner" was admitted as a disciple, do we not know that she became at the same instant a weeping penitent?<sup>4</sup> None, in short, remained with him, but those who were enabled to comply with his constant admonition—"Go and sin no more!"—One, only one, exception there was; they who uttered this calumny, however, knew not of it; and it was fully known, and awfully sentenced, by the holy Jesus himself. I allude to the covetous Judas—permitted to remain among the disciples, so long as secrecy precluded scandal—and that, only for the fulfilment of prophecy.

Such were the calumnies intended against Jesus, in the words of my text. And I wish I could say, that such falsehoods were not still repeated even among ourselves: but, in every age, Satan and his followers have pursued the same methods, in order to bring discredit on the Gospel. What else is the meaning of speeches like the following? 'Christians, for aught I see, are no better than others!' True—because you seldom meet with the *real* Christians: you see many

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xix. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Luke v. 27, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Luke vii. 36—38.

pretenders — hypocrites — formalists — mere national Christians; but Christ does not own these as his people. Again—‘None but poor and ignorant people believe!’ an assertion, which is just as true now, as it was in the case of our blessed Saviour himself.

But, having thus shewn you the falsehood of these words in their intended meaning, I remark that

II. THE SAME WORDS UNDESIGNEDLY EXPRESS A MOST GLORIOUS TRUTH.—They truly describe

1. The Persons on whose behalf the Son of Man is—interested; “This man receiveth Sinners.”

*None but sinners*—among the race of Adam, at least—have any concern or part in Jesus Christ. He comes to us in that character, and in none other. If there be any who conceive themselves entitled to the reward of righteousness, they must stand back: Jesus “came not to call them, but sinners to repentance.”<sup>1</sup> The very character of his gifts implies this. He offers pardon—none but sinners are capable of it; conversion—for wanderers; sanctification—for them that are unholy; redemption—for the captives of Satan. Why then will any refuse to humble themselves, seeing that none else can be exalted by him?

*The vilest of sinners* are not shut out from partaking in that mercy, which is equally needful to the most virtuous. ‘There is no hope,’ you would have said, ‘for Publicans—those avaricious, hard-hearted, oppressive collectors of a foreign tax.’ Yet here we find them seated at the same table with Jesus! There were harlots too! Nay, some of the very murderers of Jesus were afterwards admitted to his favour! Look, moreover, at that black catalogue of crimes which is drawn up in 1 Cor. vi. 9; and then observe

<sup>1</sup> Matt. ix. 13.



the declaration that immediately follows—"And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Nor let it be supposed, that cases of this kind were rare exceptions. No, dear brethren; millions in every age have been admitted to the fold of the good Shepherd, who were once the veriest bond-slaves of sin and Satan. And therefore let none despair—but let every sinner repent, and hasten to Jesus; to him who hath said—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."<sup>1</sup>

Once more—*Sin still dwelleth*<sup>2</sup> even in those who have partaken of the mercy of Christ; yet doth he not cast them off. And why? Because he is not displeased to behold sin in his followers? God forbid! No—but because he delights to see them 'fighting manfully' against it, and gradually overcoming it through the power of his grace. Though they love him, they are sinners daily; but because he loves them, "sin shall not have dominion over them"<sup>3</sup>—nay, he "will bruise Satan under their feet shortly."<sup>4</sup>—But this leads me to notice further, how truly these words describe

2. The Regard which he shews toward them; He "*receiveth* them, and *eateth with* them."

It is indeed no carnal or earthly provision, to which sinners are now invited by their merciful Saviour. His blessings are altogether of a spiritual kind; they are therefore the more valuable—the more lasting.

*He receives them to his own favour, and to that of his Father.* It was in order to this, that he took your nature upon him; having been, from all eternity, "equal with God,"<sup>5</sup> though here insulted under the title of "*This Man!*" He could not otherwise have

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 37.<sup>2</sup> Rom. vii. 20.<sup>3</sup> Rom. vi. 14.<sup>4</sup> Rom. xvi. 20.<sup>5</sup> John v. 18.

shed blood to make atonement. But now, from his throne of glory, he invites you to return to God. He offers you "access with confidence by faith in him."<sup>1</sup> "Come out from among them," saith he, "and touch not the unclean thing, and I will *receive* you, and will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."<sup>2</sup>

*He receives them to spiritual communion with himself, and with his Father.* In the ordinances of public and private prayer—in the holy Communion—in the reading or hearing of his Word—he has engaged to "be in the midst of them,"<sup>3</sup> and to "manifest himself unto them as he does not unto the world."<sup>4</sup> Nay, he comes unsought, "stands at the door, and knocks"—bringing countless mercies in his hand, for him who will but welcome this Friend of sinners. By spiritual communion with him, you may have your soul at once comforted and sanctified, instructed and cleansed.

*He receives them, finally, to his visible presence in the kingdom of his Father.* "I appoint unto you a kingdom . . . that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, sitting upon thrones."<sup>5</sup> And again—"In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and *receive* you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."<sup>6</sup>

Are these, my brethren, the words of truth and reality? Then why tarry ye any longer, if guilty sinners may hope for a reception so unmerited, so glorious as this? "Rise, he calleth you"—to repentance and conversion, to faith and pardon, to holiness and heaven! Oh, turn no longer a deaf ear to his condescending entreaties! Say—"Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 12. <sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. <sup>3</sup> Matt. xviii. 20. <sup>4</sup> John xiv. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Luke xxii. 30. <sup>6</sup> John xiv. 2, 3. <sup>7</sup> Jer. iii. 21—23.

## SERMON XLIII.

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*ECCLESIASTES xi. 9.—Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

IT was the mournful recollection of his own follies, which led Solomon, the wise King of Israel, to address his young friends in this remarkable manner. His wisdom, though supernaturally increased by Divine inspiration, had not preserved him from making the world his idol. And he had “received in himself that recompence of his error which was meet:” he had, in every fresh trial, found the world to be “vanity of vanities—all vanity;” till at last he comes forth, broken-hearted, humbled, penitent king, to tell his disappointment—setting himself up as a beacon, to be hunted by all who would not make shipwreck of their heavenly hope.—The remembrance of his youthful self-sufficiency makes him distrustful, as it may seem, of the success of a more direct admonition to his younger hearers: he therefore endeavours to arrest their attention, by the appearance of granting them every worldly gratification, on which they may have set their hearts. But how startling and solemn is his conclusion—“Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment!”

We have here, then, in the first place,

I. AN IRONICAL PERMISSION. “ Rejoice, O young man, in the days of thy youth.”

1. *The Permission itself* is as wide, as the most eager youthful disposition could wish ; it might rather indeed be taken for a command.

“ Rejoice.”—Pleasure and enjoyment are objects of universal desire ; and here the utmost measure of them is recommended. In early life, more especially, we grasp at joy, and delight in a cheerful heart. Well—you are here counselled to do this with your whole soul ; nay, the counsel is repeated, as though there were some danger lest you should disregard it—“ Let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth.”—Again,

“ Walk in the ways of thine heart.” Not in the ways of piety—these, as all young folks know, are gloomy and disagreeable. Not in the way recommended by parents, or Christian instructors—that is full of constraint and mortification. Not even in the way of diligence, prudence, and industry—even there too you will encounter many vexatious difficulties. No—take “ the way of thine heart.” If you love pleasure and idleness, take it ! If you love drink, take it ! If you love races, fairs, feasts—follow them all ! Or, if your pleasures be of a more decent and decorous kind, still “ walk in the way of thine heart” after wealth, honour, power, comfort : put no restraint on thy desires, but gratify them to the utmost.—Once more,

“ Walk in the sight of thine eyes.” Whatsoever thou seest that is pleasant, aim at it : whatever thou seest to be right, ask nobody’s opinion, but follow thine own : whatever thou seest is done by others, do the same thyself. In short, let Self be thy only god ; and honour it with all thy mind, and soul, and strength.

Surely, my friends, here is licence large enough for the most greedy inclination. Methinks I hear some of you beginning to say—‘ If all this be in the Bible, I shall like the book better than I have done : but is it really so, as it seems to say ? ’ No !—it is just the contrary : the Wise man is forbidding that which he appears to recommend.

2. *The bitter Irony* of this permission is—or ought to be—most awakening. It tells you, that

Such is generally the Course of heedless youth. They need no prompters. Of their own accord they are too ready for follies like these ; as though there were no God, no heaven, no hell, and even no dying bed, “ every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.”<sup>1</sup>

Such, moreover, is the foolish Advice, which young people delight to give and receive. “ Hand joins in hand ”<sup>2</sup> to work wickedness. Songs are made to harden the conscience, or, as they call it, to ‘ drive away care : ’ and the continual cry is—‘ Never fear ! Peace, peace ! ’

Such, lastly, is the most fatal Curse which an angry God could pronounce, on those who are bent upon the world and sin ; ‘ Take it, take it—and make the best of it ! ’ Thus he gave the people of Israel quails in his anger—and a plague together with them.<sup>3</sup> Thus in his anger he gave permission that Balaam should go with the princes of Moab—which was the direct road to Balaam’s destruction.<sup>4</sup> Thus God says in Hosea<sup>5</sup>—“ Ephraim is joined to idols ; let him alone ! ” And in this sense he addresses many a carnal heart in the language of my text ; as if he should say—‘ Go now, I will no longer interfere—I will send thee

<sup>1</sup> Jer. viii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xi. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Num. xi. 31—33.

<sup>4</sup> Numb. xxii. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Hosea iv. 17.

no more terrors, no pressing invitations. Revel on in sin; forget that there is a God; live and die and perish, for I will interrupt thee no more !'

Brethren ! will any one among you accept so awful a permission as this ? Yes—thousands, alas, do accept it : they live after their own heart's lust, till Justice can wait no longer. Then comes the sentence upon this barren, unfruitful soul—"Cut it down!"<sup>1</sup> and the next moment is hell—weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth—and that for ever !

That all this is not a mere fancy of my own, you may learn from the second part of the text ; in which you have—(and may the Lord write it on every heart !)

II. A SOLEMN WARNING : "Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

I can easily conceive, (for I "know the heart" of a young man,) that this will be thought a very severe warning by some here present. That frequent excuse—'I meant no harm'—has doubtless risen to your lips, ready to be uttered as soon as I should say—"Thou art the man !" You 'cannot believe' (you say) 'that youthful levities, or even excesses, will ever be hardly dealt with.' This, however, plainly arises from your thinking, "that God is altogether such a one as yourself"<sup>2</sup>—a thought, at once condemned by what you hear in my text. "For all these things"—for all the usual frolics, self-indulgences, and sins of youth ; for all of them, without one exception, "God will bring thee into judgment." Yes—even "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment ;"<sup>3</sup> and how much more, then, for unbridled lusts, appetites, and passions—for cursing and lying—for broken sabbaths, and a Gospel despised !—But let me point out,

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm l. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xii. 36.

1. *The Principle* of that judgment, into which you must be brought, and of which you are so solemnly warned. It will proceed upon the principle, that youthful sins are offensive to God. Even from the youngest among us, God requires a loving and obedient heart. He addresses you in words of peculiar kindness, saying—"I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."<sup>1</sup> And can all this be forgotten by him? Can he think lightly of self-will, passion, lying, or uncleanness, in those to whom his most special invitations are sent? No, no! If he "remember the sins of our youth"<sup>2</sup> alone, we are undone.—Another principle of that judgment will be, that youthful sins actually disqualify you for the enjoyment of heaven. Look at the giddy follower of feasts and races, of drunken revels and of violent sports! If it be possible, put him into that heavenly world—among prophets, saints, angels! Is he not manifestly out of his element? Why, he cannot endure the short-lived seriousness of an earthly sabbath! What then must an everlasting sabbath be? No—the judgment decides upon him, and upon every "lover of pleasure"—Unfit for the kingdom of God!<sup>3</sup> Not meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light!<sup>4</sup>—Consider, further,

2. *The Manner* of that judgment. It can only be known from God's express word: I will therefore refer you to two distinct Scripture statements, which ought to "make both the ears of every one that heareth them to tingle."—One of them is the description, given by the Judge himself, of what will take place "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory."<sup>5</sup> Read it at your leisure; and then plead for sinful

<sup>1</sup> Prov. viii. 17.<sup>2</sup> Psalm xxv. 7.<sup>3</sup> Luke ix. 62.<sup>4</sup> Col. i. 12.<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxv. 31—46.

indulgences, if you can!—The other is a prophetic vision, in which St. John witnessed, by anticipation, what we must all behold in reality hereafter. “I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the books, according to their works. . . And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.”<sup>1</sup> To that awful scene, O sinner, thou must be brought: and I shall meet thee there. Ah! I already see the Judge! I behold him questioning thee—he is examining his books—and there it is written, that thou didst follow his ironical advice! Oh what woe—but stop! before the sentence is pronounced, let me tell you of

3. *The Remedy* against that judgment. This, you perceive, is not in the text: but the blessed Gospel supplies it; and it is my glad office to set it forth, that you may hear, believe it, and live. I say not—‘Abstain from all sin;’ it is now too late for that! nor—‘Make atonement for the sins of youth, by the virtues of riper years;’ that is impossible! No, but—‘Come to Christ, your future Judge, but now gracious Saviour.’ In earnest prayer, ask of him a free pardon—a new heart—the favour of God—his sanctifying Spirit. All these his blood has bought; and they shall be given to all who seek them. Turn then your back on sin and destruction. With a “repentance not to be repented of,”<sup>2</sup> “ask the way to Zion, with your face thitherward, saying, Come, and let me join myself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xx. 12—15.<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 10.<sup>3</sup> Jer. i. 5.



## SERMON XLIV.

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GENESIS xviii. 27.—*And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes !*

“THE cities of the plain” had at length filled up the measure of their iniquities : God’s forbearance was at an end ; and the angels of vengeance had actually set out for the guilty spot. Abraham, “ the friend of God,” receives this token of the Divine regard, that he is previously informed of the Divine purpose. He is deeply interested by the awful communication ; for in that devoted place lives his nephew Lot, with his whole family. Without delay, therefore, and with the most affectionate concern, “ Abraham drew near and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked ? ” Not content with this, he adds—“ Wilt thou not spare the place, for the righteous that are therein ? ”

From this passage in the history of Abraham, many instructive lessons may be learned.—Let it teach you,

I. THE TRUE POSTURE FOR A SINNER, AT THE THRONE OF GRACE.—He must lie low, and aim high.

You see this in the behaviour of Abraham on the present occasion. Though honoured by a fresh token of the Lord’s confidential friendship, he has

1. *Low thoughts of himself.* He cannot forget who and what he is: "I am but dust and ashes!"

The expression is singular. It alludes, I think, *first*, to the Meanness of his Origin. What was Abraham—what are all men—but "dust?" "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground"<sup>1</sup>—of the very meanest material. And shall a creature, so formed, intrude into the presence of the great God? of Him, before whom Angels, "that are greater in power and might," veil their faces? If we do at all "draw near," surely it must be with the most lowly reverence. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few."<sup>2</sup>—But this expression of Abraham may allude, *secondly*, to the Corruption of his Nature. "Dust" is what God made it: but "ashes" have had a value, which is now departed from them. Thus man, however mean, was yet not offensive, till he "corrupted his way"<sup>3</sup> before God. Of this fallen race was Abraham; nay, "*all* we like sheep have gone astray"<sup>4</sup>—have forgotten and provoked the Lord—have lost the little value which we originally possessed, and are fit only to be cast out with abhorrence. Hence, like Abraham, we must entreat—"Oh let not my Lord be angry!" and must be brought to feel, that, had we not an express warrant, it would be the most intolerable arrogance for us, vile transgressors, to "take upon us to speak unto the Lord."—Yet, with all this self-abasement, Abraham has also

2. *High thoughts of God:* high thoughts, *first*, of his Equity; "The Judge of all the earth," he is persuaded, must and "will do right." Any other sup-

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 7. <sup>2</sup> Eccles. v. 2. <sup>3</sup> Gen. vi. 12. <sup>4</sup> Isa. liii. 6.

position, indeed, were an affront to the Lord. And therefore, brethren, when you ask of him any favour, rest assured of this, that, whatever the Lord shall do, will be rightly done ; though it may be so done, as to mortify your ignorant self-love. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."—But, *secondly*, let Abraham teach you also to entertain equally high thoughts of his Mercy. Be not backward to ask of God, what you are unable to claim. Abraham pleads, not only for righteous Lot, but for wicked Sodom. Why should any favour be shewn unto *her* ? He can assign no equitable ground for it—he asks it as a mere unmerited gift ; but he asks it, in full confidence that the request will not displease the Lord. And "such trust have we also, through Christ, to God-ward."<sup>2</sup> He is "the God of all grace"—more ready to hear, than we to pray : as his majesty is, so is his mercy.

Again, this history exhibits

**II. THE GENEROUS CHARACTER OF TRUE GODLINESS.**—For whose welfare does Abraham make this urgent intercession ? Two parties were included in it, neither of whom had very greatly deserved such kindness at his hand.

1. *Lot his Nephew*, though not named, had (we may suppose) the foremost place in his good wishes. He was a pious person ; and "wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked ?" Yet there had been a selfishness in Lot's former conduct toward Abraham,<sup>3</sup> which, in a heart less under Divine influence, might have weakened, if not destroyed, his uncle's affection. Moreover, the nephew had chosen, for the sake of mere temporal advantage, to take up his abode in the

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxlv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> See chap. xiii. 8—13.

midst of very ungodly society ; where his family, if not himself, had forsaken and forgotten the service of the true God. Besides which, Abraham had once interposed to deliver Lot from a great calamity, and had apparently met with little gratitude in return.<sup>1</sup> But “ many waters cannot quench love ; ” <sup>2</sup> especially that love, which dwells in a sanctified heart.

2. *The people of Sodom*, on the other hand, are expressly named. Abraham knew that they “ were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.” Yet even for them he prays. If possible, he would have the whole city spared, for the sake of the ten righteous persons, who (he thought) must surely be found there. And wherefore was this ? He could have no affection for their persons—he must have abhorred their characters. Yes—but he had compassion for their souls. He could not bear to think of their “ going down to the pit,” to “ suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.”<sup>3</sup> What could be more disinterested—generous—noble ?

Now observe ! This is the man who, in the New Testament, is celebrated not so much for his charity, as for his Faith in God. And it is the praise of Faith, that such are its native fruits. None so entirely wish well to mankind, as those who believe in God. If then you would abound in good works, pray that you may have “ like precious faith ”<sup>4</sup> with holy Abraham.

III. THE EFFICACY OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER is another lesson taught us by this narrative.

This is a duty to which Christians are not, perhaps, sufficiently alive. One reason may be, that they doubt the use or benefit of praying for others. Let them learn a different lesson here. All that Abraham

<sup>1</sup> See ch. xiv.    <sup>2</sup> Sol. Song viii. 7.    <sup>3</sup> Jude 7.    <sup>4</sup> 2 Peter i. 1.

asks is granted. "The righteous" are *not* confounded with "the wicked:" God "delivered just Lot." The wicked themselves are dealt with, to the very letter of Abraham's demand. God even condescends to let the terms be made lower and lower; till at length it is promised, that, if but ten righteous be found there, the city shall be spared. And who will assert, that if Abraham had descended even lower still, and supposed the number of righteous inhabitants to be but five—or three—nay, even one only, his petition would have been rejected? Suffice it to say, that the *conditional* request for the city failed, only because he fixed the conditions higher than was warranted by the facts of the case; while the *absolute* request for Lot was successful.

Surely then those words of St. James are true—"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."<sup>1</sup> And be not discouraged by the sound of that word *righteous*. Was Abraham righteous, in the full and strict sense of the term? He tells you himself—"I am dust and ashes!" But "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."<sup>2</sup> He was "justified by faith"<sup>3</sup>—and sanctified by Divine grace.—Are you "walking in the steps of his faith?"<sup>4</sup> Then *you* also may intercede, for friends or enemies, for the godly or the ungodly, for your own children or for strangers, for the Christian world or the heathen world—and you shall be heard. Go therefore, and, like the murdered Stephen, imitate his murdered Master and your own, praying for your worst enemies—"Lord, lay not this in to their charge!"<sup>5</sup> "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!"<sup>6</sup>—Here is, lastly,

<sup>1</sup> James v. 16.<sup>2</sup> Rom. iv. 3.<sup>3</sup> Rom. v. 1.<sup>4</sup> Rom. iv. 12.<sup>5</sup> Acts vii. 60.<sup>6</sup> Luke xxiii. 34.

#### IV. A FAINT TYPE OF OUR GREAT INTERCESSOR, JESUS THE SON OF GOD.

Was Abraham's a generous interposition? That of Jesus is far more unmerited. He intercedes for enemies! A world in arms against him cannot interrupt purposes of love toward the guilty race.

Did Abraham appear to have some weight, as "the friend of God?" Yet see how his intercession must be preceded by the humblest apologies; and know, further, that it could never have been accepted, but through Christ. Far more authoritative is the mediation of Jesus. He stands in his own name, and on his own merits; not as a servant, high in favour indeed at court—but as the King's Son.

Did Abraham persevere, with an earnestness which, in his own eyes, seemed almost to border upon presumption? The event shewed, notwithstanding, that he left off too soon. This will never be said of our divine Intercessor. "He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth"<sup>2</sup>—till he have fully accomplished all his purposes of grace.

Once more: let Abraham intercede as he might, whether on this or on subsequent occasions; yet his good offices were sure to be terminated, sooner or later—"not being suffered to continue, by reason of death."<sup>1</sup> After death—as the rich man in torments found<sup>2</sup>—he neither can nor will interpose. But Jesus "ever liveth to make intercession for us."<sup>3</sup> To him, therefore, bring all your cares, sorrows, sins, ~~wants~~. Quit devoted Sodom; and return to dwell with ~~the~~ "Friend," who "loveth at all times," and who "sticketh closer than a brother."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vii. 23. <sup>2</sup> Luke xvi. 24, &c. <sup>3</sup> Heb. vii. 25. <sup>4</sup> Prov. xviii. 

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## SERMON XLV.

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**JAMES v. 10, 11.**—*Take, my brethren, the Prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

**MAY** the Spirit of Christ be our Teacher, while we

**I. CONSIDER THE EXAMPLES HERE DWELT UPON.**

“Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example

1. *Of Suffering affliction.*”—Yes! even those, who come to us as messengers from heaven, find no exemption from sorrow on earth, high as they may be in favour with Him who sends them. Nay, he warns them to expect a greater share of these things; and to look for their complete happiness in that world only, where “the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.” Every Christian warrior—much more the leaders in that warfare—“must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”<sup>1</sup>

The sources of Affliction are various.

It may proceed from the wickedness of Man—as in the case of those whom St. James is here exhorting to patience under their sorrows. They were poor,

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiv. 22.

labouring Christians, oppressed by the rich.<sup>1</sup> A sad affliction this, when 'might overcomes right;' when those who should be the natural protectors, become the unnatural oppressors, of the feeble and helpless! Such oppression is, however, still more grievous, more strange, and more wicked, when it takes the form of "persecution for righteousness' sake."<sup>2</sup> And this was the case of those prophets, by whose example St. James encourages his suffering brethren. "Which of them had not their fathers persecuted?"<sup>3</sup> The city of Jerusalem had always taken the lead in this atrocious wickedness. "From the blood of righteous Abel, to that of Zacharias"—nay, to that of Jesus Christ himself—it was she "who had killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her."<sup>4</sup> And, my brethren, "as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now;"<sup>5</sup> and, in one shape or other, so it will continue to be, till we reach that "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Affliction may come, moreover, from the influence of Satan. He is "the god of this world;"<sup>6</sup> and (so far as he may be permitted) endeavours to lull his servants in a deceitful prosperity, and to heap trouble upon the righteous. We have an instance of this in the story of Job. From what is related concerning him, it seems probable that even those distresses which spring from natural causes—from disease, from war, from tempests and bad seasons—may have their origin in the malice of that Evil One, who is expressly called "the prince of the power of the air."<sup>7</sup> Nor can it be doubted, that, whatever power he may possess, either to afflict the body, or to distress the

<sup>1</sup> James ii. 6.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 10.    <sup>3</sup> Acts vii. 52.    <sup>4</sup> Matt. xxiii. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Gal. iv. 29.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Eph. ii. 2.



soul, it will be specially exerted against those who fear the Lord.

Yet, in both kinds, affliction still comes from the permission of God. We must never so look at second causes, as to forget that He still "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."<sup>1</sup> This is clearly revealed in the case of Job: not only was "the end" the Lord's, but the beginning also was his. It was equally so in the persecutions which the prophets underwent. Nothing befel them, but what God had foreseen, foretold, permitted. The evil intention was man's—was Satan's: but without the Lord's permission not a hair of Job's head could have been touched—not "a sparrow," even now, "falls to the ground."<sup>2</sup>

Let us take the prophets as an example, further,

2. "*Of Patience under affliction.*—Doubtless they were "men of like passions," in mind as well as body, "with ourselves."<sup>3</sup> They therefore groaned under their sorrows, and earnestly prayed for deliverance. Nay, they were sometimes guilty of great impatience. Thus, in the moment of bitter anguish, both Jeremiah the prophet, and patient Job, "cursed their day:"<sup>4</sup> even Moses, the meekest of men, once "spake unadvisedly with his lips."<sup>5</sup> But the habitual disposition was patience; and this is evident from several considerations. For example—

They held fast their integrity under every affliction.—The object of wicked men, and of Satan, was to seduce or terrify them from their adherence to the service of God. But all was in vain. "They loved not their lives unto the death."<sup>6</sup> Elijah, a single prophet of the Lord, sets himself in bold opposition to four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal.<sup>7</sup> Micaiah, when

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 11. <sup>2</sup> Matt. x. 29. <sup>3</sup> Acts xiv. 15. <sup>4</sup> Jer. xx. 14. Job iii. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. cvi. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. xli. 11.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Kings xviii. 22.

intreated to please the king who "hates" him, refuses.<sup>1</sup> The three children dare the furnace—Daniel, the lions; "because they believed in their God."<sup>2</sup> Nor were those New Testament prophets, the apostles of Jesus, less courageous than they. Threatened, imprisoned, beaten—they would still "obey God rather than man."<sup>3</sup>—Again,

They blessed God, though he permitted their affliction.—Job's history may stand as the proof for them all. "Naked," saith he, "came I out of my mother's womb; and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."<sup>4</sup> Again, when urged by his wife to "curse God and die," he replied—"Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"<sup>5</sup>—Once more,

They sought the good of those who afflicted them.—The prophets were all along the true friends of their Jewish countrymen. See how Jeremiah weeps for them!<sup>6</sup> Recollect David's conduct towards king Saul<sup>7</sup>—Job's sacrifice for his uncharitable friends<sup>8</sup>—Stephen's prayer for his murderers<sup>9</sup>—Paul's "heaviness and continual sorrow" for the unbelieving Jews.<sup>10</sup> "Here was the patience of the Saints!" Here was their meekness and love; overlooked—undervalued—misunderstood by men, but in high honour with God.

And now, that we may be prevailed upon to 'follow the blessed Saints in their virtuous and godly living,' let us in the second place,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xxii. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Job i. 21, 22.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Sam. xxiv. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Dan. iii. vi.

<sup>5</sup> Job ii. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Job xlii. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Rom. ix. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Acts v. 29.

<sup>6</sup> Jer. ix. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Acts vii. 60.

## II. WEIGH THE MOTIVES HERE SET BEFORE US.

The first is

1. *The universal Christian sentiment*, that "they are happy who endure."—"We count them" so, saith St. James. The World does not: it counts them fools, and miserable madmen, for preferring "the reproach of Christ"<sup>1</sup> to earthly gratification. The Sufferer often counts himself not happy; for it were absurd to imagine, that any affliction is in itself "joyous," and not "grievous." Still, with the exception of these two judges, (the one incompetent, and the other not impartial,) all others will agree with Solomon, that "it is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting;"<sup>2</sup> or with Him who is greater than Solomon—"Blessed are they that mourn;" "blessed even are they, which are persecuted for righteousness' sake."<sup>3</sup>—Here observe, however, that it is not the mere suffering of affliction, but the patient endurance of it, which constitutes the happy man. Rebellious murmuring makes the load heavier: meek submission conquers all. Even the sufferer himself confesses, on looking back, that "it is good for him to have been afflicted."<sup>4</sup>—Now the agreement of all the followers of Christ in this sentiment, is surely a powerful argument for patience under affliction.

2. *The history of God's End in the afflictions of his people* is another. This consideration is drawn from the story of Job's sufferings: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord."—The end *aimed at* was the manifestation of Job's religious sincerity, which had been falsely accused by Satan. God had also a further end in view, when he permitted Satan to inflict those sufferings; namely, to

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 26.    <sup>2</sup> Eccles. vii. 2.    <sup>3</sup> Matt. v. 4, 10.    <sup>4</sup> Ps. cxix. 71.

increase Job's humility—thus rendering him capable of receiving more and greater spiritual blessings. The end *granted* was, not only the accomplishment of these gracious purposes, but the removal of the trial, and the restoration of comfort, peace, and joy.—And thus in every faithful servant of the Lord, affliction is the trial of faith, the discipline of a Father, the earnest of promotion; “afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby.”<sup>1</sup> And should not this consideration produce patience?—We have a third motive in

3. *The compassionate character of God*—“The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” How well was this known, by those who had seen him in the flesh, repaying with blessings every indignity which he received from man, and mourning over the approaching ruin of guilty Jerusalem herself! How is it confirmed to us, by the love which was displayed on Mount Calvary! He who manifested these bowels of mercy, was and is “the Lord;” almighty to prevent affliction, if desirable; all-gracious to moderate it; all-wise to direct it to the profitable issue.

Under such guidance, the end to which he is leading you cannot fail of being accomplished; and the prophets themselves may teach you to expect that accomplishment, at an earlier period than unbelief is apt to suggest. “After *two days* will He revive us:”<sup>2</sup> “weeping may endure for a *night*, but joy cometh in the morning:”<sup>3</sup> “our light affliction is but for a *moment*.”<sup>4</sup> Nay, hear the Lord himself—“For a *small moment* have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee:”<sup>5</sup> “hide thyself for a *little moment*,” and “the indignation will be overpast.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews xii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Hosea vi. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xxx. 5.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah liv. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah xxvi. 20.

## SERMON XLVI.

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HEBREWS xi. 13.—*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

YOU have here, in few words, the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ from the wilderness of this world to an everlasting “city of habitation.” You learn what it is which induces him to commence the journey; in what manner he complies with that inducement; what sustains his hope as he proceeds; and in what state of mind he finishes his course. Here is, in short, the whole ‘Life and Triumph of Faith:’ and it will be our own fault, if, after meditating on these words, we be not stirred up to become “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”<sup>1</sup>—Many individual specimens of the faithful Pilgrim are referred to in this chapter; the Apostle having prepared us, by this declaration in my text, for a right understanding of his character.

The nature and operation of Christian faith, therefore, is the subject now before us. May we all be disposed, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to give it the attention which it demands!

True Faith includes five things:

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vi. 12.

## I. A SIGHT OF DISTANT, PROMISED BLESSINGS.

Not that the believer is left destitute of comforts and privileges connected with the present life. True—the world is regarded by him principally as a state of trial and discipline: yet such are even his present gains, that he would not exchange them for the richest treasure of the ungodly. Nevertheless, his greatest prize is yet to come: he “sees” it indeed, but he has not yet received it—it is “afar off.”—Such were the blessings seen at a distance by that “father of the faithful,” Abraham: the possession of Canaan by his posterity, though he himself had not a foot’s-length of freehold there; the countless number of his descendants, when as yet (at a hundred years old) he had no child; and among them, that one “Seed,” in whom “all the families of the earth should be blessed”<sup>1</sup>—even Jesus the Saviour. All these he saw, but only in the form of promises. The things themselves were very “far off,” and were made visible to him solely by the word of God.—But to Abraham, and to us also, blessings more remote still are (by the same Divine promise) held up to view: the salvation of the soul—the resurrection of the body—the life of glory—the sight and enjoyment of “God and the Lamb;” all these are freely and fully offered by the Gospel, to every one who will accept them on God’s terms. It is acknowledged that they are distant blessings: but God’s promise calls our attention to them; and the knowledge that such a promise exists is the first step towards a true faith.—It includes, secondly,

## II. A PERSUASION OF THEIR REALITY.

The world is so notoriously full of promises and hopes, issuing in disappointment, that it might still be

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xii. 1—3.

doubted whether the blessings of which I have spoken had any real existence. In point of fact, many do treat the whole Christian system as a fable; and, in saying this, I refer not to avowed Infidels alone, but to a large proportion of nominal Christians. Their habitual feeling is, that the promises of the gospel are not fully to be trusted—that they will not bear them out, if acted upon—or at least, that they are exaggerated. And (what seems very strange) you cannot get them to make any serious examination into the truth of the case, or to abide by the truth so far as it may be discovered. Now what is such a state of mind, but secret Atheism?

But the happy few, in whom true faith is found, have a full, satisfactory, abiding persuasion, that there are such future blessings, as the promises make known. I will not deny, that an occasional hesitation of mind may be suggested by the great enemy; but the habitual belief to which they continually return is this: 'God has spoken—has spoken by his Son Jesus—has spoken *to me*, as to one who must assuredly witness the fulfilment, whether of his promise to them that believe, or of his wrath against them that believe not. God is true—God is able to keep his word—he must, he will; and therefore, after all the mockery of an ungodly world, I come to the deliberate conviction, that—"Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth."—Have *you* this full persuasion, brethren? this essential ingredient in a genuine faith? A promise to be believed is set before you; have you anything like this conviction of its reality?

But alas, you may have attained thus far, (for thus far "the devils also believe,") and yet be no Christian pilgrim. His faith in the promises includes, thirdly,

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lviii. 11.

## III. AN ACTUAL EMBRACING OF THEM.

'Oh yes!' says the worldly man, 'to be sure I believe the bible—I have no doubt that good people will go to heaven!' And perhaps you might not find it easy to convince him, that he disbelieves these things: but you have no difficulty in discovering, that he takes no interest in them. Here then is a faith, "persuaded" of the truth, but not "embracing" the truth! Do you still ask what is meant by *embracing* it? A few examples, out of many that are supplied by this chapter, will furnish the explanation.—Noah is "warned of God, of things not seen as yet;"<sup>1</sup> and is directed to build an Ark, as his only safeguard from the waters of a flood. He believes; and he "embraces the promise" of deliverance, by adopting the means of deliverance.—Moses might perhaps become hereafter king of Egypt; but he is assured that the Jewish slaves will be supernaturally brought out, and conducted to the long promised Canaan. For this apparent uncertainty, he abandons all other worldly views—and this was his "embracing of the promise."<sup>2</sup> You may trace the same principle in every instance of faith recorded in this chapter. And now see the position in which you yourselves stand. God says, that eternal fire is prepared for sinners; his Gospel points to a way of escape—the only way—by Repentance and Conversion, and by a simple Trust in the Atonement of Christ. Do you ask, then, 'How shall I embrace the salvation thus offered?' The answer is plain—'By coming to Christ for it, in the way prescribed—repenting, converting, trusting in him.'

It is not real Faith, till this deliberate act takes place. And if so, how many among us are evidently condemned as unbelievers!—But there will be, fourthly,

<sup>1</sup> Verse 7.<sup>2</sup> Verses 24—26.



#### IV. A VISIBLE INFLUENCE ON THE HEART, THE LANGUAGE, AND THE LIFE.

Men, thus believing, openly profess "that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth." It is their genuine feeling. Let a man gaze upon the Sun, till he can without pain examine its splendors: he will find, on recalling his eyes to this lower world, that their power is gone for a season. And such is the effect, where faith is in full exercise: one upward glance at "the glory that shall be revealed,"<sup>1</sup> is enough to eclipse the most glittering earthly bauble. You observe that the Christian is commended for that very thing, on account of which the word censures him; namely, his peculiarity and strangeness. This peculiarity is, in fact, inevitable, where the faith is genuine. Others may exclaim, "See what manner of stones, and what buildings are here!"<sup>2</sup> But the believer, like his Master, thinks only of the day when "all these things shall be dissolved."<sup>3</sup>—The Pilgrim cannot settle himself in a strange land: his tastes, views, intentions, are all diverse from it; and therefore his language and conduct also proclaim, "that he is seeking another country."<sup>4</sup> This is an indispensable token of genuine faith. Is it then to be traced in your conduct? Is it the language of your heart—the language of your life?

Faith in the Divine promises includes, lastly,

#### V. A STEADFAST RELIANCE ON THEM, EVEN IN DEATH.

After "seeing," "being persuaded," "embracing," and walking as "pilgrims and strangers," the black river of Death still remains to be crossed, before we "receive the promise." But "the righteous hath

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. v. 1.    <sup>2</sup> Mark xiii. 1.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 11.    <sup>4</sup> Verse 14.

hope,"<sup>1</sup> even then ; and they that " walk by faith " will assuredly " die in faith."

It is indeed a striking circumstance, that, in this comprehensive description of the believing children of Abraham, the Apostle should have alluded, not in the first instance to their lives, but to their deaths. " These all *died* in faith." Here was, in fact, the highest triumph of faith. Abraham " went forth, not knowing whither he went ;" but he still had with him some friends, and many comforts. Nay, he also lived to see, to enter, and to " walk through the length and breadth " of the Land of promise. But he whom Death summons, must sacrifice everything ; nor has any living man had even a glimpse of that world, which lies beyond the grave.—A wise heathen,<sup>2</sup> " having no hope," might therefore well say, that Death was ' of all frightful things the most frightful.'—Here, then, let every one bring himself to the touchstone. ' What is my hope, if God should this very hour take away my soul ?' Ah, brethren, can the World promise anything here ! Or will you believe it, if it do ? Who but Christ speaks here one single comfort ? Well—the believer, who has trusted him in health, will trust him to the last : and so far from regretting, that he has anxiously waited for that which he must die without receiving, he dies in peace and joy, as on the verge of eternal bliss. ♥

This is what Faith in Christ, and that alone, can do for you ! " Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth ? " <sup>3</sup> He will, in some : beware that you be not found wanting.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xiv. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xviii. 8.

## SERMON XLVII.

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**ROMANS** xiii. 12.—*The night is far spent, the day is at hand ; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

ROME, at the time when St. Paul wrote this epistle, was the capital city of the greatest Empire in the world : it was also the strong-hold of idolatry, and of every kind of vice. The pure gospel of Jesus Christ, nevertheless, had already made its conquests, even in this abandoned city ; and St. Paul had heard such an account of the Christian church established there, that he “longed to see them,” in order “that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift.” It is to them that this epistle is addressed ; in which the Apostle, after setting them on the only right foundation of faith in the righteousness of Christ, proceeds to urge upon them the practice of holiness in every relation of life. Universal love, in short, is the substance of all his exhortations.

One powerful argument, by which he enforces the obligations of practical godliness, is contained in my text.—Our Church appears to have considered the words peculiarly appropriate to the season of the year called Advent ; which in one point of view they undoubtedly are. I shall therefore desire your attention, in the first place, to

I. THE FACT ASSERTED BY THE APOSTLE. "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand."

What night? what day?

1. *In reference to the entire heathen city of Rome, and the heathen world at large*, the night of Gentile ignorance and vice was far spent, and the day of Gospel knowledge, grace, and blessing was at hand.

For a melancholy succession of ages, idolatry and all its wretched attendants had covered a fearful proportion of the world. This had originated in Man's wilful apostasy; and it had been perpetuated by God's judicial sentence. Three times in the first chapter of this epistle is it said, that "God gave them up."<sup>1</sup> But he had long ago promised, that they should not be finally abandoned. That Redeemer, who was expected as "the glory of his people Israel," would also be "a light to lighten the Gentiles."<sup>2</sup> The glorious time was at length come. Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea—had blessed the Jews with his preaching and his miracles—had risen from the grave, and been "taken up to glory." For a little space, so much respect had been paid to the ancient people, that to them first the offer of salvation was sent. But the day of the Gentiles could no longer be delayed: its dawn had already been seen: and the full rising of "the Sun of righteousness" would shortly beam over all the nations.

2. *In reference to the Christian Church at Rome*, the night of imperfect acquaintance with the Gospel was far spent, and the clear day of spiritual light was at hand.

Christianity had been introduced into that city, by those who brought with them many Jewish prejudices; and St. Paul had thought it necessary to send them this clear and orderly exposition of its doctrines—not for their

<sup>1</sup> Verse 24, 26, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ii. 32.

benefit alone, but for the instruction of the Church at large, in all ages.—For their case was by no means singular. Repenting sinners, at their first turning to God, are often very clouded in their views. They discern neither the real depth and pollution of their sins, nor the absolute necessity that salvation should be altogether through Christ. They lean too much to themselves. Mere self-love impels them, rather than a desire to please God. But where the heart is right—that is, under the influence of God's Holy Spirit—this is but a short-lived night. If they be sincerely seeking after him, the day is at hand which shall dispel the mists of error, and bring well-grounded peace to their consciences. “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> “To you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings.”<sup>2</sup>

3. *In reference to each individual Christian, who-soever and wheresoever he may be, the night of temptation, trial, and trouble is far spent, and the day of heavenly glory and bliss is at hand.*

“Through much tribulation” must the kingdom of heaven be entered, even by the most faithful and most favoured believer. In this world, Satan will still labour to terrify or ensnare the soul. The ungodly, whether in friendship or enmity, will still interrupt the Christian's progress. His own heart will still pour forth its corrupt streams, which can never be sweetened. His conflict with evil must be painfully sustained, all through this night of his earthly existence. But cheer up, thou friend of God! “the night is far spent.” All these “days of thy vanity”<sup>3</sup> have their appointed time, beyond which they cannot be prolonged; and then cometh the glorious morning. “The

Hos. vi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Mal. iv. 2.<sup>3</sup> Eccl. ix. 9.

day-spring from on high hath visited thee, to guide thy feet into the way of peace ;”<sup>1</sup> it shall shortly visit thee again, to guide thee to “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Be not startled, if Death stand in the way—he cannot keep thee from the light of glory ; nay, he is the messenger from Him who is “thine everlasting Light.”<sup>2</sup> A few more weary steps, and thy night shall be ended, and thy eternal day begin.

II. THE EXHORTATION FOUNDED ON THIS FACT is as follows. “Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”

The Apostle, you observe, is keeping up his allusion to the Night and the Day. Each of these has its appropriate dress. At night we are comparatively unprotected, and loosely clad ; when day brings back the active employments of life, the night-dress is thrown aside, and another put on. The warrior, more especially, puts on his “armour” when day is at hand, that he may be prepared for every assault.—Thus both the night of heathenism, the night of imperfect Christian knowledge, and the night of earthly trial, have each their appropriate garb ; which ought to be diligently thrown off, as the day of Christian privilege and blessedness advances. This seems to be the meaning of the Apostle’s words ; but we may take a more general view of his exhortation, as intended to lead the Christian

1. *From the Practice of all sin.* The dress to be “cast off” is certain works—“the works of darkness.” No one can doubt what these are. They are works of iniquity : and well are they so called ; for—

Their source is darkness. They were first plotted in that kingdom of darkness over which Satan presides ;

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 78.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah lx. 19.

and, since the fall of Adam, the human heart itself is become a council-chamber of rebellion against God—for “out of it proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, fornications, revenge, wickedness”<sup>1</sup> of every kind and degree. Look in the face of man, as tamed and restrained by human laws and by Divine providence, and you see little or nothing of this. But look into your own heart, with God’s Spirit for your teacher, and you will find there “a darkness which may be felt ;” and will cry out with St. Paul—“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?”<sup>2</sup>

Their scene of action is darkness, as far as man can render it so. Sin is practised in secret, long before it takes courage to shew its hardened face abroad ; and vast as is the amount of the open wickedness prevailing in the world, it is as nothing when compared with the hidden iniquities—the secret intemperance, the concealed impurity, the unknown frauds, the unuttered malice, which no eye but that of God can behold.

Their end is darkness—the “blackness of darkness for ever !” Sin must return to the place from whence it came ; and woe to him who shall be found in its company at the time ! Oh make haste, therefore, to cast it from thee ; lest thou hear that fearful word—“Cast him into outer darkness ! there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

But St. Paul is not content with dissuading, unless he may succeed in leading us

2. *To the Pursuit of all holiness.* “Let us put on the armour of light.”

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, he enumerates the several particulars of the Christian armour.<sup>3</sup> But it is more briefly described, in the verse almost immediately following my text : “PUT YE ON THE LORD

<sup>1</sup> Mark vii. 21, 22.    <sup>2</sup> Romans vii. 24.    <sup>3</sup> Eph. vi. 13—17.

**JESUS CHRIST."** It is a striking expression ; and may be regarded as including two distinct admonitions.

*First*, Make the Example of Christ your pattern. Copy his purity, patience, benevolence, condescension, forgiveness, spirituality, fortitude. He left us this example, that we should tread in his steps ;<sup>1</sup> an example the more persuasive, since all he did, and all he endured, was 'for us men and for our salvation.'

*Secondly*, Seek for Union with Christ, as your strength. His example is too high a pattern for man to attain unto, unless by strength derived from him. He must be to you, what the vine is to its branches, or the head to the body. And how shall this union be maintained ? By faith, and by persevering communion with him. The sanctifying influence of his Spirit will in this way descend upon you, and you will be enabled to "do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth"<sup>2</sup> you. Dwell in him, therefore, and walk in him. Daily put him on afresh, and "abide in him ;" that you may not, like Adam and Eve, be found naked to your shame, but may have confidence when he shall appear, and not be confounded before him at his coming.<sup>3</sup>

In this exhortation, the enlightened believer is the person mainly concerned. But **HAVE YE BELIEVED**, in deed and in truth ? Are not some among you still in the night of nature ? If so, *your* first business is to awake, and come to Christ for pardon and reconciliation with God. "Repent, and believe the gospel !" "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light !"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter ii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John ii. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. iv. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. v. 14.



## SERMÔN XLVIII.

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SONG OF SOLOMON i. 7, 8.—*Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon ; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?—If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.*

THOSE who are familiarly acquainted with the holy and affectionate intercourse which took place between Jesus and his friends eighteen hundred years ago—especially as it is described by “the disciple whom he loved”—will have no difficulty in discovering, that the dialogue in my text is between the same persons, and conducted in the same spirit. It is the Church addressing her Lord : it is the condescending Saviour giving in reply the instruction required. May he, by his Spirit, be present among us, while we humbly draw nigh, to overhear and profit by the conversation.

I. THE CHURCH ADDRESSES HER LORD. What do you observe in her Address ? You perceive

1. *A conscious Love to her best Friend.* She has, in fact, no other name for him, than that which at the same time expresses her own affection—“O thou whom my soul loveth !”

This is not the language of compliment : it is the fervent ardour of the heart. It is addressed to a Being, *with whom any attempt at imposition would be utter*

madness; and it is spoken with the confiding sincerity of one, who knows that her heart will bear the scrutiny to which she subjects it. It is the affectionate Peter, saying—"Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee!"<sup>1</sup>

The Church loves him for his personal Excellence. He is "fairer than the children of men,"<sup>2</sup> while he himself is one of them. But she knows that he is also the Son of God—"God manifest in the flesh;"<sup>3</sup> at once, therefore, able to feel for human sorrows, and almighty to redress them.

The Church loves him, further, for his condescending Gifts. He has given hope, where despair alone reigned. He has bestowed "peace with God," through "the forgiveness of sins." He has given the Holy Spirit, "another Comforter,"<sup>4</sup> during his own bodily absence from us. But above all, and as the means of all, he has given HIMSELF—his blood, his life: he "gave himself for our sins."<sup>5</sup>

The Church loves him, once more, for his precious Promises. These are indeed "exceeding great." They include every blessing which the Christian can need on earth; but they look forward also into a boundless eternity. And they are all "Yea and Amen in him."<sup>6</sup> They will be finally wound up, by Christ's coming again, to take his Bride to himself, when her "eyes shall see the King in his beauty, and behold the land that is very far off."<sup>7</sup>—Oh who that has any spiritual apprehension of these blessings, can fail to "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity?" And why should not this be the case with all? Are any excluded from his love, but those who exclude themselves?

Again, in this address of the Church to her Lord, you observe

<sup>1</sup> John xxi. 17.    <sup>2</sup> Psalm xlv. 2.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. 16.    <sup>4</sup> John xiv. 16.  
<sup>5</sup> Gal. i. 4.    <sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. i. 20.    <sup>7</sup> Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

2. *A Dread of swerving from her loyalty to him.*  
“Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?”

This feeling—the dread of being unfaithful—is the natural accompaniment of true affection: and thus, in exact proportion to our love for Christ, will be the aversion which we shall feel toward his rivals. The one will increase or diminish with the other.

Christ has indeed many rivals: and that, not only in hearts which “the god of this world hath blinded,”<sup>1</sup> but even in those of his faithful followers. They would be regarded as “companions”—as not inconsistent with his honour and service; but they are enemies. Of this nature are many novelties in doctrine, which may appear harmless; many zealous practices, nominally for the honour of Christ, but in reality to support a party; many worldly compliances, by which men vainly hope to conciliate the ungodly; and many carnal indulgences and pleasures, for which the flesh pleads as needful recreations.

The spiritual Christian is aware that there are such rivals. He knows how ensnaring they are—how feeble and treacherous his own heart is. But he has no wish to yield. “Why should I turn aside?” “Lord, to whom shall I go? thou alone hast the words of eternal life.”<sup>2</sup> Nay, he is desirous of avoiding even “the appearance of evil.” If possible, he would not even “be as one that turneth aside,” after any of the rivals of his adorable Lord. Are these your feelings, brethren? If they be, you will fully enter into the conclusion of this address; which contains

3. *An anxious Petition for his pastoral care.* “Tell me where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.”

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 68.

A true believer knows at all times, that, if he needs anything, it must come out of the fulness of "the good Shepherd:" but there are seasons, when he feels at a loss how and where to seek the communication. He never is ignorant, however, what are the blessings of which he stands in need.—He needs *Food for his soul*; something to nourish and strengthen him, in the exercise of that spiritual life, which has been implanted by the Holy Ghost. And it is to Christ that he looks for it—"Tell me where *thou* feedest;" that I may "go in and out, and find pasture."<sup>1</sup>—He needs *Rest to his soul*; the assurance of sin forgiven—calmness and readiness of approach to the mercy-seat—peace from the "war in his members"<sup>2</sup>—victory over the world, whether it allure or terrify him. And because Jesus has invited "all them that labour and are heavy-laden," he "comes;" "Tell me where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon." "Bless me, even me also!"—Have you ever felt and uttered anxious wishes of this kind? And do you desire to know in what manner such petitions will be received? Then listen, while, in the second place,

II. THE CONDESCENDING SAVIOUR REPLIES.—His reply contains three things.

1. *A gentle Reproof*: "If thou know not"—

They who know so much of Christ, as the petition implies, already possess the means of knowing more. But they are apt to forget their past experience of his care, and of the way in which they sought and found it; and impatiently desire some new and unusual means to be employed for their consolation. Then he will gently reprove—"How! knowest thou not? if I be not a Saviour to others, yet doubtless I am to thee!"

<sup>1</sup> John x. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Romans vii. 23.

Thus did he reprove those who were "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken" concerning his sufferings.<sup>1</sup> Thus also was Philip reprov'd for having such indistinct views of his Divine nature—"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?"<sup>2</sup> Surely it is not unreasonable that he should be displeased, at the tokens of an ignorance which need not have existed.—Yet "faithful are the wounds of a friend;" and therefore the reproof is instantly succeeded by

2. *An expression of Endearment*: "O thou fairest among women!"

But what manner of language is this, for the all-seeing God to apply to a creature, utterly unworthy of standing in His presence, before whom angels veil their faces! Has he then forgotten, that we are "conceived in sin," and "shapen in iniquity?"<sup>3</sup> No, my brethren; this he can never forget, till he shall forget what he has done to "purify unto himself a peculiar people." No—if he behold in us any comeliness at all, it is but that which he himself has put upon us; "the garments of salvation—the robe of righteousness."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, by that robe all the deformity of his Church is so concealed, that, as it is written, "he hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel."<sup>5</sup> He sees, moreover, the graces of the Spirit which he himself bestows upon his children; imperfect, indeed, but genuine—variable, but progressive—resisted by the flesh, but gradually victorious over it.

He hears their sighs, he knows their fear,  
And owns and loves his image there.

His reply contains, lastly,

3. *A significant Reference*. Certain questions had

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 25.

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm li. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah lxi. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Num. xxiii. 21.

been asked : the Saviour will not give a direct answer, but refers the Questioner to those who could satisfy the enquiry. "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents."—What does this signify? It intimates,

That Christ will have his people to be helpers of each other's faith, hope, and love. For this purpose, they should study the history of each other's experience, as related in Christian biography, or dwelt upon in retired converse. "Iron sharpeneth iron ; so doth the countenance of a" Christian "man his friend." <sup>1</sup> The footsteps of the true flock all point the same way ; to discover them, therefore, is to discover Him, who is "the way, the truth, and the life." <sup>2</sup>—It is intimated, again,

That Christ puts especial honour upon his own ordinance, the preaching of the Gospel ; and upon his Ministers in that excellent work. He is himself "the Chief Shepherd ;" yet "the tents" of his under-shepherds must also be frequented. He often teaches without them, but more commonly by them. And thus it shall be, "even to the end of the world"—for so long has he himself promised to "be with them." <sup>3</sup>

And if all his faithful shepherds must be regarded, yet most of all must you listen to those, who wrote by his inspiration that blessed book, which his providence preserves to us. Being dead, they yet speak : and what is said of one, is true of them all—"The preacher sought to find out acceptable words ; and that which was written was upright, even words of truth." <sup>4</sup> I may therefore conclude with the explicit admonition of Him, who has this day been speaking to us in parables—"Search the Scriptures ! for in them ye think ye have eternal life ; and they are they which testify of me."

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxvii. 17. <sup>2</sup> John xiv. 6. <sup>3</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20. <sup>4</sup> Eccles. xii. 10.

## SERMON XLIX.

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**ZECHARIAH** iii. 2.—*And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan ! even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee ! Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ?*

**ZECHARIAH** prophesied at the time when the Jews had lately returned from their captivity in Babylon. The people, notwithstanding this happy restoration, were in most abject and destitute circumstances ; and their state of mind was at once selfish and despondent. Their Church, more especially, seemed to be in a hopeless condition. In the chapter before this, the Lord endeavours to raise their hope of better times by direct promises. Here he does the same by a striking vision. The Jewish Church is represented by its head, the High-priest Joshua : various objections are brought against it, but the Lord over-rules them all ; declaring his will, that it shall be restored to His favour, notwithstanding its past guilt, or present degradation.

‘ But what is all this to us ? ’ Much, my brethren ! The Jewish Church was a type of God’s spiritual Church throughout the world : and in that spiritual Church, each individual member is dealt with on the same terms as the whole collective body. Consequently this transaction, in which Joshua appears the *person chiefly concerned*, represents to us the way in

which every true child of God becomes a partaker of "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."<sup>1</sup>

From the passage before us, then, we may learn

### I. THE CHRISTIAN'S WOEFUL CONDITION BY NATURE.

#### 1. *He is exposed to Condemnation.*

It is the condition of us all. Sent into the world as creatures of God, to be his stewards and servants, and with an excellent law as the rule of our conduct, we have "broken his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us."<sup>2</sup> Does not your Conscience acknowledge, that you have done this? Yet you are too proud to own yourself guilty! Well—it is before the Lord that the trial must take place: and consider whether you can there "answer him to one charge of a thousand."<sup>3</sup> For you also, like Joshua, will find an adversary there "to resist you." Whether it be Satan, whose temptations you followed—or the holy law, which you despised—or the Spirit of God, whom you grieved—or the Saviour, upon whose blood you trampled; all, all will resist your claim for acquittal—all will condemn you.

It is the condition even of the true Christian. In himself, he has no reply to the accusations of Satan. Not only before but since his conversion, he has given many a handle to that "accuser of the brethren;" and it appears that every possible advantage will be taken—"night and day he accuseth them before God."<sup>4</sup> Remember, then, O child of God, thy real deserts, should the Lord ever listen to the charges against thee. Amid all thy privileges and hopes, thou art still, in thyself, a sinner condemned.

<sup>1</sup> Jude 21.    <sup>2</sup> Psalm ii. 3.    <sup>3</sup> Job ix. 3.    <sup>4</sup> Rev. xii. 10.



2. *He is an object for God's abhorrence.*

“Joshua was clothed with filthy garments,”<sup>1</sup> as he “stood before the angel.” His very appearance would excite disgust.—That this is the condition of unconverted man, requires little proof. With no desire to please God, and a heart overflowing with impure, selfish, worldly desires—how is it possible that the Creator should not abhor him? To him, in its fullest sense, the epithet “filthy” may be applied; as it is, in the book of Job—“How abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water!”<sup>2</sup>

But even Joshua—the Church—the sincere Christian, if viewed in his own real colours, is as truly deserving of abhorrence, before Him who “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” And for this reason he is here set before us, “clothed in filthy garments.” And what are those offensive garments? His *sins*? Yes; his appetites and passions, but half mortified—his remaining self-will—his frequent backslidings, in heart if not in conduct. All these are foul spots, which grieve the Spirit of God: and if the Lord, for Christ's sake, do not utterly abhor thee for them, O Christian, yet it certainly behoves thee to “abhor thyself, and repent in dust and ashes.”<sup>3</sup>—But it is no less true of the Christian's *duties*, that they deserve the name of “filthy garments:” hence that humiliating confession of the Church in Isaiah—“All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”<sup>3</sup> They are so mingled with sin, so imperfect, so scanty; our love is so cold, our zeal so inactive, our “humbleness of mind” so vain and self-sufficient; that it is a wonder the Lord doth not altogether loathe us, and banish us from his presence.—Now if such be the deservings even of a Christian man, you cannot doubt that, in strict justice,

<sup>1</sup> Verse 3.<sup>2</sup> Job xv. 16.<sup>3</sup> Isaiah lxiv. 6.

3. *He is on the very brink of destruction* : so near to it, indeed, that he is here described as a brand actually in the fire—a coal already kindled.

This, I say, *has been* the condition of every real believer ; and, were he dealt with on the score of merit, it would be so even now.—It is the condition of all the unconverted ; and that, in more senses than one. Are you the servant of sin and Satan ? Do you swear, defraud, and break the holy Sabbath ? Are you living unchastely, or in malice, envy, and strife ? Then I say, your hell is already begun ! The fire of your lusts, the heat of God's anger, is already upon you : but if you die without being converted from this state, a far worse burning awaits you ; a fire, never to be quenched—in which, like the bush seen by Moses, you will for ever burn, yet not be consumed.<sup>1</sup> “ Now consider this, ye that forget God ; lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver ! ” <sup>2</sup>

But now, from viewing the Christian's woeful condition by nature, let us pass on to contemplate

## II. HIS HAPPY ESTATE BY GRACE.

It might seem impossible, that all these fatal circumstances should meet together in the same individual, and leave a single ray of hope. But this vision of Joshua proves, that nothing is impossible, where God determines to shew mercy. In spite of every hindrance, Joshua is accepted—the Christian is saved.

### 1. *His conviction is quashed.*

It is not urged, that there are no grounds for condemning him. When Satan resists the sinner's admission to favour, no reply is made in order to disprove the charges. They are tacitly allowed to be true ; and *the sinner is convicted*, as by the strict justice of God,

<sup>1</sup> Exodus iii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm l. 22.

so by his own conscience and confession also. But, at this critical moment, there is an arrest of judgment: the Accuser is forbidden to proceed—"The Lord rebuke thee!" Now what is this, but the gracious declaration of the Gospel—that "there is now *no condemnation* to them that are in Christ Jesus?"<sup>1</sup> not, none deserved; but, none inflicted. Let Satan accuse as he may; yet "every tongue that shall rise up in judgment" against the people of God "shall they condemn."<sup>2</sup> The Lord will "rebuke him."

Observe, moreover, the only ground which is assigned, for this exemption from punishment: nothing but the Lord's free and unmerited choice! "The Lord *that hath chosen Jerusalem*, rebuke thee!" Brethren, if God "has from the beginning chosen you unto salvation," and has declared that choice, by your "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,"<sup>3</sup> then his own free love shall secure you against every charge: and to nothing else must you ever ascribe your deliverance.

2. *He is clothed afresh*, through the merits of the Saviour, and with the graces of the Spirit of God.

The "filthy raiment" of guilt is what *we* cannot lay aside: but Christ took it away, when he "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He then "brought in an everlasting righteousness," even "the righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe."<sup>4</sup> It is their "wedding garment." It hides their deformity and pollution. It is "made white in the blood of the Lamb." He that wears it—"his transgression is forgiven, and his sin covered;" and it is to him a "robe of righteousness, and garments of salvation." At the same time, he begins to be "renewed after the image of him that

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 1. <sup>2</sup> Isaiah liv. 17. <sup>3</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 13. <sup>4</sup> Rom. iii. 22.

created him ;”<sup>1</sup> the Spirit of God thus “ sealing him unto the day of Redemption.”<sup>2</sup> By all these means,

3. *He is effectually saved from ruin.*

Although that ruin was begun—although hell seemed inevitable—he is “ plucked out of the fire.” Satan has lost a captive ; hell, an inhabitant. The believer is indeed still subject to temptation, but it shall not prevail : “ the flesh still lusteth,” but on the whole he is “ led of the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> He may sometimes despond—“ I shall one day perish !”<sup>4</sup> But that God who has plucked him out, will keep him out—will “ deliver him from every evil work, and preserve him unto His heavenly kingdom.”<sup>5</sup> Even now, the Angels rejoice over him, saying, “ Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire !”

Let this subject lead you to inquire, whether the all-important change has yet taken place in you. Guilty—is your condemnation yet reversed ? Filthy—have you yet obtained spiritual cleansing ? Lost, by natural corruption, and sinful practice—has the grace of God in Christ Jesus found and saved you ?

If you have any hope that this is the case, then take heart, notwithstanding your vileness. There is indeed no hope of “ covering your own sins ;”<sup>6</sup> but much, of having them all “ frankly forgiven.”<sup>7</sup> Go to “ the angel,” before whom Joshua stood ! See the meekness and love which beam in his countenance ! It is your Saviour—he stands there as your advocate. Plead nothing of your own : “ make mention of his righteousness, and of that only.”<sup>8</sup> He will acknowledge you, worthless as you are : “ This my son was dead, and is alive again ! he was lost, and is found !”

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 10. <sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 30. <sup>3</sup> Gal. v. 17, 18. <sup>4</sup> 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.  
<sup>5</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 18. <sup>6</sup> Prov. xxviii. 13. <sup>7</sup> Luke vii. 42. <sup>8</sup> Psa. lxxi. 15.

## SERMON L.

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**MALACHI iii. 1.**—*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

THESE words were spoken in reply to the unbelieving priests of Malachi's day, who professed that they could see no tokens of the presence of God among his people. They had "wearied the Lord" with their infidel speeches; insolently demanding—"Where is the God of judgment?" The God of judgment assures them, in reply, that he whom they pretend to "seek," and to "delight in," will come probably sooner than they wish; to visit, to prove, and to punish them. And here, four hundred years before the accomplishment of the prediction, he lays down certain marks, by which it should be known hereafter, that he had spoken all these things unto them.

The Lord describes, first,

**I. THE PREPARATION FOR HIS COMING.** "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me."

You cannot be ignorant, that this promised messenger arrived in the person of John the Baptist.—John "prepared the way" of the Lord,

*1. By his singular Birth.* His parents were old.

They had never had children—and it seemed impossible that they ever should. But lo ! an angel descends to announce, that a child shall be born of these aged persons ; thus, by the return of miracles, preparing men's minds for His arrival, by whom such “ works, as never man did,”<sup>1</sup> should be habitually performed.

2. *By his awakening Ministry.* The Jewish church, though still keeping up their hopes of a Redeemer, had become, at the period of his expected arrival, altogether carnal. Spiritual religion survived among a very few only, who, with clearer views, “ waited for the consolation of Israel.”<sup>2</sup> The true preparation therefore for the Saviour's coming, was, to rouse and alarm the public mind, and to “ convince them of sin.” Such was the course pursued by John :—“ Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And he went largely into the nature of repentance ; shewing what were the “ fruits meet for it ”—exposing hypocritical pretenders to it—announcing judgments at hand, to all who should not “ bring forth good fruit ”—and lastly, in every instance of baptism, demanding a full confession of sin :<sup>3</sup> by all which, he so strikingly “ prepared the way,” that many supposed John to be the very Messiah whom they expected.

3. *By direct Testimony.* John Baptist was too faithful a messenger, to take to himself the honours that were due only to his Employer. In the full tide of his popularity, therefore, he told them of One “ mightier ” than himself ; One, already “ among ” them, though “ unknown ; ” One, “ preferred ” far before him ; One, compared with whom, he was but a “ voice,” to be regarded only till his Master should appear. By the providence of God, the Baptist had no personal knowledge of Jesus, till

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ii. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. iii. 1—12.

Jesus offered himself to be baptized. Then, being miraculously informed of the Saviour's presence, "he saw and bare record, that this was the Son of God"—"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."<sup>1</sup> And this he continued to do, till a prison ended his testimony.—The Lord foretells,

II. THE TIME OF HIS COMING. The period at which He would "come to his temple," was to follow "suddenly"—that is, immediately—after the preparation of his way by the "messenger." No *long* preparation was to take place: no interval would come between the herald and his Lord: the silence of the one would be suddenly followed by the public ministry of the other.

And how remarkably did the facts agree with this prediction! "When Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee:"—for what purpose? To hide himself? No; but to make it the habitual scene of his public labours. For St. Matthew adds, very pointedly—"From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;"<sup>2</sup> instantly taking up, you observe, the same topic of instruction, which the lips of his messenger had just ceased to utter. So exactly was the precise time of his appearance foretold.—But observe,

### III. THE DIGNITY OF HIS COMING.

Who is this great Personage, before whom John is to prepare the way? It is the very Being who engages to send John for that purpose; "*I will send*"—"he shall prepare the way before *Me*." Can it be any mere man, who uses such authoritative words?

<sup>1</sup> John i. 19—34.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iv. 12. 17.

No—it is Jehovah himself ; it is “ the Lord of hosts.”—Such then was the Messiah to be : and such, without all controversy, Jesus of Nazareth was—“ the Son of the Highest”<sup>1</sup>—the Creator of that world,<sup>2</sup> of which he was now to be the Redeemer. He “ thought it no robbery to be equal with God ;”<sup>3</sup> yea, he “ is over all, God blessed for ever.”<sup>4</sup>

In order to prevent any doubt on this head, it is added—“ The Lord shall come to his temple ;”—manifestly alluding to the temple at Jerusalem. And who, I pray, was the Lord of that temple ? Who, but “ the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ?” If, then, this be a prophecy of the coming of Christ to the temple at Jerusalem, the conclusion is undeniable, that Christ is the Lord of the temple ; and, if so, that he is “ the God of Israel.” And indeed, his own behaviour in that sacred place declared no less. Having “ found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves . . he drove them all out,” and said, “ Take these things hence ; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandize.”<sup>5</sup> It was one of the first acts of his public life.—But you may object that he calls it his “ Father’s house,” not his own. True—he did not choose at first to offend the Jews, by being more explicit than was needful at that time. But he repeated this act near the end of his ministry ; and see the language which he then used, when there was no longer any occasion for reserve. After a solemn procession down Mount Olivet—after passing amid acclamations all through the city to this same temple—after once more casting out the buyers and sellers ; with what dignity does the Incarnate God pronounce—“ My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves ! ”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 32.<sup>2</sup> John i. 3.<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 6.<sup>4</sup> Rom. ix. 5.<sup>5</sup> John ii. 13—16.<sup>6</sup> Luke xix. 45, 46.



Thus did this "son of a carpenter"—this poor houseless Galilean—this despised Jesus—"manifest forth his glory;" and, while "his disciples believed on him," his enemies were stricken with awe, as before the visible Lord of the temple.

Again, this prophecy discloses

#### IV. THE SPECIAL BUSINESS OF HIS COMING.

This is intimated in the other name here given to him—"the Messenger of the covenant."

It may be thought strange, that he who is first described as the Lord of hosts, and Lord of the temple, should now be spoken of as a "Messenger:" for, unquestionably, greater is he that sendeth, than he that is sent—but who then is greater than God? To Christian minds, however, this will be no insurmountable difficulty. 'Equal with the Father as touching his Godhead,' Christ is at the same time 'inferior to the Father as touching his manhood.'<sup>1</sup> He voluntarily "took upon himself this form of a servant,"<sup>2</sup> in order that he might become the Messenger of heaven to a lost world. And what was his message? He came to reveal, and to fulfil his own part in, a gracious covenant, formed "before the world began,"<sup>3</sup> between the Father and himself—a covenant of redemption for guilty sinners. The Son's part in that covenant, was, to be "made flesh"—to "bring glad tidings of joy" to the penitent believer—and then, as High Priest between God and man, to offer up the atoning sacrifice. This was his commission, as the Messenger of the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure."<sup>4</sup> And who will hesitate to say, that it was amply fulfilled by

<sup>1</sup> Athanasian Creed.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Jesus of Nazareth? Yes; he “came and preached peace”—he died to secure it—and even to this hour, in his name, and by his express command, “to you is the word of this salvation sent.”—The prophecy declares, lastly,

V. THE CERTAINTY OF HIS COMING. The unbelieving Jews doubted it: even the faithful were despondent: the prediction is therefore attested by a most solemn assurance—“Behold, he *shall* come, saith the Lord of hosts.”

And he *did* come, my Christian brethren! We are about to repeat our commemoration of that blessed event. We need no further argument, to prove that this is “he that should come,” and that we must not “look for another.” To us then, you may say, the prophecy is a dead letter. No, brethren; it is we alone who enjoy the full benefit of it. It tells of the faithfulness of a covenant God. It may remind us, moreover, of another “Coming of the Lord,” which is no less certain—yea, it is near, “even at the door.” How are you looking forward to Christ’s *glorious* advent? Are you really doing, what these Jews hypocritically pretended to do—“delighting” in him? “seeking him?” If not, tremble! for “behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” But are you of the number of those, “who love his appearing?” Then fear not! When he comes, “your redemption draweth nigh.” When he comes, it will be that he may make you a pillar in his heavenly temple—and “you shall go no more out.”\*

\* See Bp. Horsley’s four Sermons on this prophecy.

## SERMON LI.

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1 JOHN iii. 8.—*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

“BLESSED be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people!”<sup>1</sup> He had indeed once visited them, amid the thunders of Mount Sinai: he had redeemed them from Egypt, and afterwards from Babylon: but he had taught them to expect greater things than these. At length, “He came who was to come, and no longer tarried.”<sup>2</sup> Six months before his own birth, he sent into the world his promised harbinger; who had no sooner been admitted into the church by circumcision, than his father set the tune, as it were, for the songs of praise to be thenceforth sung by the faithful, in the words with which I opened this discourse—“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people.”

This hymn of thanksgiving we are once more called upon to sing, by the return of Christmas: that you may be enabled to sing it “with the Spirit, and with the understanding also,”<sup>3</sup> I have chosen a text which will direct your attention to

### I. THE FACT—THAT THE SON OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED.

“The Son of God!” Can you form any adequate idea of what is meant by that glorious title? Not a

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews x. 37.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

son of God ; all true Christians “ are children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> But here is One who so bears the name, as to exclude all others from participating in it. He is “ the only begotten Son”—equal to, and one with, the Father. The full meaning of these expressions is, no doubt, far beyond our comprehension. Thus much, however, is evident. He, who as at this time became manifested, was previously invisible. Like his Divine Father, he was “ dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto—whom no man had seen or could see : ”<sup>2</sup> to sum up all in a single word, he was GOD—“ the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”<sup>3</sup>—At length,

He “ was manifested.” He came forth from his secret place, that men might “ behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”<sup>4</sup> And how did he effect this ? In various ways—to each of which my text may be supposed to refer.

1. *By his mysterious Incarnation.* This is the first article in what St. Paul calls the great mystery of godliness—“ God was manifest in the flesh.”<sup>5</sup> St. John had used a similar expression—“ the Word was made flesh.” In the womb of the spotless Virgin, a union took place between the two natures ; so that they who afterwards saw “ the man Christ Jesus,” beheld at the same time the Lord God of Heaven and earth—‘ perfect God and perfect man.’ This was made manifest,

2. *By his personal Ministry.* Hitherto, his Godhead was not sensibly displayed. The infant in the manger wept, and hungered, and was weary, like any other human infant. Even the singular wisdom of

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> John i. 1.

<sup>4</sup> John i. 14.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

his boyhood might have been merely an unusual specimen of youthful talent, and (what is still more rare) of youthful piety. But, when his public ministry began—then, through the thin veil of his flesh, the Godhead shone forth, in every word and action of his life. Miracles—prophecies—authority and influence over all around him—condescension, kindness, and love, more than human; all these things declared, that it was the living God walking and acting in sight of his creatures. “The life,” saith St. John, “was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.”<sup>1</sup>—Do we regret the loss of this? He gives us an equivalent,

3. *By the promulgation of his Gospel.* “Go ye into all the world,” said he to his disciples, “and preach it to every creature; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” And therefore, whithersoever the true preaching of the gospel comes, thither comes the Son of God himself, and there he is again and again manifested. Hence, St. Paul says to the Galatians (who certainly had never seen Christ in the flesh)—“Before your eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you.”<sup>2</sup> The same may be said of you. Not the person of the Son of God, but his majesty, grace, and power are revealed to you, in the preaching of the gospel, when “we pray you in Christ’s stead, Be ye reconciled unto God.”

4. *By the presence of his Spirit.* All the other manifestations are but to the eye, or to the ear; this is to the heart. Oh pray, my brethren, “that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith”<sup>3</sup>—that his Spirit may “take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 2.    <sup>2</sup> Gal. iii. 1.    <sup>3</sup> Ephesians iii. 17.

you!"<sup>1</sup> This blessing the Apostles still enjoyed, though their first Comforter was gone away: this the meanest Christian, if he be truly such, possesses equally with them. May it be your portion, and mine; that thus beholding him by faith, we may "not be ashamed before him," at "the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup>

II. THE DESIGN OF THIS MANIFESTATION must now be considered. "The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

Respecting that awful being, who is here called "the devil," men in general are as ignorant and thoughtless, as they are concerning the Son of God. His name, indeed, is continually bandied about by their lips—sometimes in wanton levity, sometimes in anger and fury against a brute beast, or a fellow creature. But few seriously believe in his existence, or dread him as the secret enemy of their souls. Nevertheless, every evil which the Redeemer came to rectify, proceeded originally from the devil. It was in order to undo his doings, to "destroy his works," that the Son of God was manifested.—Let us look at some of those works.

1. *God's dishonour* was the main object aimed at by the devil, when he seduced man into sin. And, for a while, he seemed to have succeeded. God had made a new world, which Satan immediately defiled—had formed a race of subjects, whom he changed into rebels—had called that "very good,"<sup>3</sup> which the devil quickly rendered very evil. Now if God had instantly destroyed the work of his own hands, his wisdom as its Creator might have been impeached. Had he continued to take pleasure in his creatures,

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Titus ii. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis i. 31.

though corrupted, his truth and holiness would have been brought in question. But in the gospel of Christ every difficulty is cleared away. He is here shewn to be "a just God," and yet "a Saviour:"<sup>1</sup> and the evil introduced by Satan, has but redounded to the greater glory of God the Father.

2. *Man's ruin* is another of his works. For though man was guilty, sinning with his eyes open; yet the plot was Satan's. "He was a murderer from the beginning."<sup>2</sup> See, in Genesis iii., how he brought about our ruin: but learn, in the same place, how God promised that his "head" should for this be "bruised" by the Seed of the woman. That Seed is the manifested Son of God. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law," by "being made a curse for us"<sup>3</sup>—by suffering Satan to "bruise his heel." Here, then, the work of Satan is destroyed. Whosoever truly believeth in Christ is saved from his power; "that Wicked one toucheth him not."<sup>4</sup>

3. *Sin's dominion* was also established, through the devil's influence. The first transgression brought a taint on the whole family of man. When our first parents yielded themselves as the servants of sin, Satan took care that they should never be free again. From that day to this, a sinful nature has been our tyrant. By means of it, that Evil "spirit worketh in the children of disobedience"<sup>5</sup>—"taking them captive at his will." But here again, Christ comes to undo what the devil has done—"to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."<sup>6</sup> And this he effects by his holy Spirit, whom he sends to awaken—regenerate—sanctify—guide—and uphold the souls whom he hath chosen.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xlv. 21.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians iii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John v. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. ii. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah lxi. 1.

"Sin shall not have dominion over you:" it may still rebel and struggle within; but it shall never again habitually influence the child of God.

4. *Death's victory* is another of Satan's doings. "Death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"<sup>1</sup> and he who was the Author of sin, has by this means obtained "the power of death."<sup>2</sup> Here however you may imagine, that his work cannot be reversed. And I must confess, that, with the exception of those which shall be "alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord," death must still reign over every child of Adam. Nevertheless, even this "last enemy," this most effectual work of Satan, shall be at length "destroyed."<sup>3</sup> Christ "brings life and immortality to light through the Gospel."<sup>4</sup> "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it."<sup>5</sup>

Consider which side you are taking, in this conflict between the Son of God, and the great Author of evil. Are you consenting to his "works?" Or are you humbly co-operating with Christ to "destroy" them?

Judge hence, what you have to expect hereafter. Though the conflict be not yet ended, there can be no doubt how it *will* end. "He must increase!" "The government shall be on his shoulders!" But, "for the Devil and his angels," "everlasting fire" is already "prepared." Oh how happy, if it may be said of you in that day—"These are they which CONTINUED WITH ME in my temptations: and I now appoint unto them a kingdom, as my Father appointed unto me."

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Tim. i. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah xxv. 8.



## SERMON LII.

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ACTS xx. 32.—*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*

THERE are few connections of a more endearing nature, than that which subsists between a Minister of Jesus Christ, and those “among whom he has gone preaching the kingdom of God.” St. Paul was the man to feel this in the very highest degree. His natural temper was ardent and affectionate: and this, when brought under the influence of Christian principle, and expanded by his assurance of the love of Christ to his soul, became a very prominent feature in his religious character. All his epistles exhibit proofs of it; and the parting scene between him and his Christian brethren, as described in this chapter, shews that they were not behindhand with him, in the warmth of their attachment.

The relation in which the Writer and the readers of this volume stand towards each other, is the same in kind, though differing in some of its circumstances. I have not been able to divest myself of the idea—(why indeed should I have wished it?) that I was preaching to my flock: and now that I see the last page at hand, I cannot but feel that a separation is taking place between us. How can we better shake hands, than with

St. Paul's farewell? Make it, my brethren, the summary of your prayers for me—as it shall be also of mine on your behalf; and may “the God of all grace” hear and confirm our mutual benediction!

Let us take the several parts of the text, in the order in which they stand.

NOW, BRETHREN, I COMMEND YOU TO GOD!

Are we, then, “*brethren?*” Yes—for we have all one Father, God; “who hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.”<sup>1</sup> And therefore, though Paul was a Jew of Cilicia, and his hearers had been heathens of Ephesus—although the Preacher may be the native of one country, and his congregation may be gathered out of all the families of the earth—still, all are members of one comprehensive family; bound, by the tie of a common origin, to a mutual regard.

But there is a brotherhood of a far dearer kind; namely, the affinity which subsists among God's spiritual children. Are we brethren in this sense likewise? It is the only really valuable, the only lasting connection. It is attained, by following one and the same Spirit—by trusting in one and the same Saviour—by honouring one and the same God: ARE WE brethren?

In both characters, “I commend you to God.” If you be dead in sins, I intreat him to quicken your souls: if careless—to make you at length serious: if stouthearted—to pull down your self-will, lest iniquity be your ruin: if “trembling at his word”<sup>2</sup>—to “cause all his goodness to pass before you:”<sup>3</sup> if acquainted with Christ—to increase that blessed knowledge: if partakers of peace and joy in the gospel—to

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lxvi. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 19.

make "your love" also "abound yet more and more."<sup>1</sup> In short, knowing my own insufficiency, either to judge what you most need, or to supply you with it, I would deposit you in the hands of that gracious Lord, "who is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think."<sup>2</sup>

I commend you, further, TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE—as the only storehouse of information respecting his will, his promises, and his love. Few, even among real Christians, sufficiently value the word of God. Though they read it, their acquaintance with its contents is often very scanty and superficial. Now I acknowledge, that, when carelessly consulted, it is in many respects a dark and mysterious book. Nevertheless, knowing that it comes from God, you must be sure that it is a book of infinite concern. Your happiness or woe—your heaven or hell—are wrapt up in it. Preachers may mislead you; human advisers may themselves need more instruction than you ask of them. But this blessed book is never wrong; it cannot lead the meek inquirer into the slightest error; and in it are contained treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which they who seek shall assuredly find.

To the guidance of this Divine word I commend you, more especially, because it is "the word of His grace." You look on it, perhaps, as a book of laws, commands, restraints, threatenings. It is so, unquestionably; but it is much more a book of grace. Its main design, its leading topic, is "grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> Had it not been for this grace, no part of it would ever have been written. There is no bible in

<sup>1</sup> *Phil. i. 9.*

<sup>2</sup> *Eph. ii. 20.*

<sup>3</sup> *1 Cor. i. 3.*

hell, to demand obedience, or to threaten still deeper miseries : none for the angels, to guide their conduct—the law of love, written on their hearts, renders it needless. For us alone is the word given ; that we might know, (what otherwise would have been hidden from us,) “ that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”<sup>1</sup> Now then I commend you to the knowledge of that grace ; that you may discover its value—may seek the possession of it—and, believing in Christ the Giver of it, “ may have life through his name.”<sup>2</sup>

An excellent reason may be given, for our thus putting you under the protection of “ the word of His grace.” IT IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP.—Believers are often compared to a living temple, or house, formed to be “ a habitation of God through the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> It is true, indeed, that the Lord is pleased to dwell in the heart of the contrite—content, as it were, to occupy that lowly cottage, till it can be purified, enlarged, and adorned. But God will not continue to reside, where he may not change and improve the habitation. To the Holy Ghost, therefore, is committed the task of building up the spiritual house—of enlightening, instructing, and sanctifying them that are “ born of God.” And the instrument which he employs for this end is “ the word of God’s grace,” “ the gospel of your salvation ;”<sup>4</sup> either as held forth by preaching, or studied in your own secret chamber. Hence, when Jesus prayed for the sanctification of his disciples, he said—“ Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth :”<sup>5</sup> and St. Paul, having occasion to declare that Scripture was “ the word, not of man but

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.<sup>2</sup> John xx. 31.<sup>3</sup> Eph. ii. 22.<sup>4</sup> Eph. i. 13.<sup>5</sup> John xvii. 17.

of God," added this character of it— that "it effectually worketh in them that believe."<sup>1</sup>

Are you, then, real believers in God's word? If so, I commend you to a more intimate acquaintance with it. It will be to you, under the Spirit's teaching, a means of "building you up on your most holy faith"<sup>2</sup>—of making you more heavenly-minded, more pure, more wise in the things of God, more zealous for the glory of Christ.

But, when we talk of building, the first thing to be secured is a good foundation. On what ground, then, are *you* resting? On the vain belief of your own merit and goodness, strength and skill? Oh, look to yourselves—for thousands fail here. "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> The attempt, if made, will prove ruinous. Begin, therefore, by a godly and penitent faith in Jesus; that your building may stand on a rock, bidding defiance to every tempest and to every assault.

Now if the word do all this for you, it is able to do still more—able TO GIVE YOU AN INHERITANCE AMONG THEM WHICH ARE SANCTIFIED. If it give you sanctification, which makes you meet for heaven, it thereby gives you a pledge of being admitted among the holy company who dwell there. It is the title-deed of that rich inheritance—the passport which you will deliver in at heaven's gate, saying—"Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope!"<sup>4</sup> And God will look, and see upon it his own hand and seal; he will acknowledge its promises, all written with the finger of God; and sooner shall heaven and earth be dissolved, than one jot or tittle of those promises pass away.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 13.    <sup>2</sup> Jude 20.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 11.    <sup>4</sup> Ps. cxix. 49.

Have you any measure of that holiness, “without which no man shall see the Lord?”<sup>1</sup> Have you even the sincere, earnest desire to become holy, as God is holy? Alas! of how few can this be truly said!—But are you one of the few, and “not ashamed” to be one of the few? Look then to God in Christ as your Helper; and to the word of his grace as your ‘rule of conduct, as the ground of your hope, and the source of your consolation,’ and all shall end well. Christ already *is* yours; salvation *is* yours; by degrees, holiness shall become yours; and at last Heaven itself, with its rivers of holy pleasure,<sup>2</sup> shall be yours for evermore,

“And that,” brethren, “knowing the time; that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.”<sup>3</sup> Our life is slipping away, year by year, month by month: with some of you it *must* be—with the youngest and healthiest it *may* be—very near its close. Some have died, and are now in eternity, who once had a fairer prospect than you or I, perhaps, of living to this hour. And if you or I should be called away, before we again commune together respecting “the things which belong unto our peace,” how will Death find us? whither will it convey us?—These are solemn questions! I pray God to write them upon every heart; and may he constrain us all to flee for our lives, to Him who is “mighty to save!”<sup>4</sup>

Farewell, dear brethren; farewell in the Lord! Should we even meet no more upon earth, may we all together be ‘numbered with his Saints,’ and sing his praises, ‘in glory everlasting.’

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xiii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxxvi. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. lxiii. 1.













